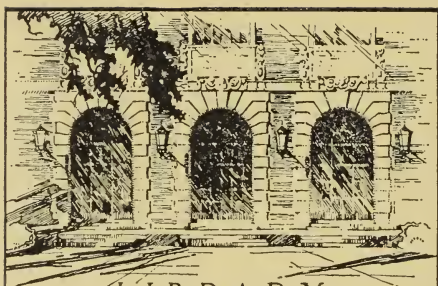


# A Hoosier in the Mexican War

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General Lew Wallace

A HOOSIER IN THE MEXICAN WAR

Prepared by the Staff of the  
Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County  
1953

One of a historical series, this pamphlet is published under the direction of the governing Boards of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County.

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FOREWORD

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Lewis Wallace, commonly known as "Lew" Wallace, was born in Brookville, Indiana, on April 10, 1827; he died at Crawfordsville, Indiana, on February 15, 1905. The son of Governor David Wallace, Lew chose the profession of law. He served in both the Mexican War and the Civil War and retired from the latter conflict with the rank of major general in the Union Army. He was an unsuccessful candidate for Congress in 1870. Later he served as territorial governor of New Mexico and as United States minister to Turkey.

General Wallace is best known, however, as a popular Hoosier novelist. His most widely read books include BEN HUR: A TALE OF THE CHRIST; THE PRINCE OF INDIA; and THE FAIR GOD. In 1906 LEW WALLACE, AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY was published.

The Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County gratefully acknowledges the kind permission of Harper & Brothers to reproduce verbatim those chapters from the AUTOBIOGRAPHY which relate the experiences of Lew Wallace in the War with Mexico.



# I

Opens recruiting-office in Indianapolis for volunteers for war with Mexico—The company leaves for New Albany *via* Edinburg in wagons—Three Indiana regiments encamped at Camp Clark—Colonel Drake—Henry S. Lane—Landing in New Orleans—General Jackson—Voyage to Brazos—The turtle—Ship.

THERE was much talk in Indianapolis about volunteering. Other parts of the state were showing activity. I hustled about, interviewing members of the "Greys" and "Arabs." To my argument that the term of service was short, only one year, some of them, with an earnestness implying personal experience, replied that a year was ample time in which to die. Finally, in fear of the passing of the opportunity, I resolved to open a recruiting-office myself. The town could not more than laugh at me.

So I took a room on Washington Street and hired a drummer and fifer. Out of the one front window of the building I projected a flag, then a transparency inscribed on its four faces, "FOR MEXICO. FALL IN." I attacked the astonished public in the street. The first round was productive. A dozen or more young men fell into the procession. Within three days the company was full.

In the election of officers, James P. Drake was chosen captain and John McDougal first lieutenant. The second lieutenantcy was given to me. Upon acceptance by the governor, we were ordered to the general rendezvous at New Albany, on the Ohio River.

In addition to the townfolk, the population of the entire country seemed present at our departure from Indianapolis. Lawyer John H. Bradley made an affecting farewell address. Mexico was a long way off, and the journey thither beset by dangers of sea and land. There were thousands who shook hands with us as with men never to return.

We were taken in wagons to Edinburg, up to which a railroad had slowly crawled from Madison. The railroad is only so called. In reality it was a tramway.

The solemnities of the public farewell scarcely moved me. That which excited sorrow in others did but stir my imagination. Nevertheless, a circumstance broke me down. We went afoot to the wagons. My father marched with me. He was in the prime of manhood; a soldier by education, he should have been at the head of the whole Indiana contingent. At my side, keeping step with me, he trudged along through the dust. The moment came for me to climb into the wagon. Up to that he had kept silent, which was well enough, seeing I had only to look into his face to know he was proud of me and approved my going; then he took my hand and said:

“Good-bye. Come back a man.”

Suddenly I gave him a shower of tears.

On the northern shore of the Ohio, midway between the present cities of Jeffersonville and New Albany, there is a ground famous in history. A wooded island at the foot of the falls used to be its *vis-à-vis*. There General George Rogers Clark held high revelry after his style, master of all he beheld—a brave, ambitious, profane, drunken, baronial Virginian. There the three Indiana regiments were assembled, organized, equipped, and mustered into the national service, my company being assigned to the First Indiana Infantry, letter



Lew Wallace  
age 21

after an old photograph.

H. The rendezvous was appropriately named Camp Clark.

In the election of field-officers for my regiment there was but one ticket: for colonel, James P. Drake; for lieutenant-colonel, Christian C. Nave; for major, Henry S. Lane; and there was no scratching. I remember being puzzled by the absence of contest. My experience was then too limited to help me comprehend the bit of furniture called a *slate*. Here is the slate of that day: Brigadier-General, Joseph Lane, *Democrat*; Colonel, First Regiment, James P. Drake, *Democrat*; Colonel, Second Regiment, William H. Bowles, *Democrat*; Colonel, Third Regiment, James H. Lane, *Whig*. Certainly the able Democratic governor knew how to provide for himself and his party.

Sergeant Charles C. Smith, a school-mate, fine-looking and clever, was by my nomination promoted to the vacant first lieutenancy, McDougal becoming captain. As a rule, jealousies among men come with years and competition.

The three field-officers are now in their graves. Neither of them selected could have carried his company through the manual of arms.

Colonel Drake was rich in good-nature—possibly too much so. He had a presence, however, to excite respect, especially on horseback, and an uncommon aptitude for tactics. In three months he had mastered the "School of the Battalion," according to Scott, whose system was then in force, and brought his command into excellent drill and discipline. In the rush to the color-line under alarm, his face would redden and shine like a harvest moon; and then, in the wake-up by the long roll at dead of night, his voice was wonderfully cheering. Ultimately he emigrated to Georgia and ended his days there an honored and useful citizen.

The command and its responsibilities never devolved on Major Henry S. Lane. Successful at the bar and in politics,<sup>1</sup> he was singularly careless as a soldier. On parade he often appeared with his sword and sword-belt in hand. He hated a horse: so that on the march his saddle was always pre-emptible by the sick and foot-sore. For a shirk he had the eyes of a detective. In his kindness, even, he was reserved and dignified. No one knew better than he that with volunteers, at least, respect for an officer is more essential than fear. He was the soul of honor and brave to a fault; and so was he esteemed by the regiment that his indifference to formalities, though sometimes laughed at, was always forgiven.

The company officers were far above the average. Some of them were remarkable men. Captain Robert Milroy, in the Civil War a major-general, dubbed by his division "Gray Eagle," must be mentioned with particularity. A graduate of the Partridge Military School, then next to West Point in reputation, he was one of the very few whom I have met actually lovers of combat. Eager, impetuous, fierce in anger, he was a genuine colonel of cavalry. In fence with sabres his wrist was like flexible steel; besides which he had a reach to make another swordsman, though ever so skilful, chary of engaging him. This I know, having been one of a class under his instruction.

I have dealt somewhat elaborately with the few officers named in order that the *verve* of the regiment may be understood. At the end of six months it could have been depended upon for heroic action under the most adverse circumstances—and, as will be seen, the remark is not made conjecturally. Few commands

<sup>1</sup> Henry S. Lane was afterwards governor of Indiana and United States senator.

have been subjected to trials so bitter; yet it did not weaken or falter in discipline.

On July 5th rations were issued and the arms and accoutrements stowed in the hold; then, with colors flying and "Yankee Doodle" from fife and drum, we marched aboard the steamboat chartered to take us to New Orleans. There were many of the regiments with sombre countenances; probably they had a better appreciation of the hazards to which we were going; but for my part the situation was full of joyances. Now, indeed, I was a soldier. My name was on the roster and the national uniform on my back; the surroundings, all martial, kept me reminded of the life at last certainly arrived.

I have made voyages since, some of them on the seas to far countries, when every hour was charged with novelties and delights unspeakable; yet they were as views by moonlight pale in comparison with this one, so full of the zest of youth that even the Mississippi River was beautiful and its low-lying ugliness of flood and forest successions of miraculous mirage. Mexico, the land of Montezuma and Cortés, and its people, and the campaign through palmetto lands and wide *pasturas*, and battles and the taking of cities—I was to see them—all else faded into the commonplace.

At New Orleans we were landed below the city to wait for ships. There we had our introduction to soldier life, mask off. Of dry ground there was not enough for a bed. We had not a wisp of straw. Our blankets turned into blubbery slime. The officers were responsible. They should have held on to the steamers.

Along with the rest, I was wretched until an old negro peddling eggs and chickens visited us. He told me casually that we were occupying a portion of the field Andrew Jackson turned into a garden of glory in 1815.



Then I hired him as a guide. The battle-ground was more interesting to me than the city. Where was the breastwork of cotton? Where did Jackson's line begin on the right? In what direction did it stretch? That line fixed, I had the key to the fight; standing on it, I faced the British assaults, and in the patriotic indulgence of fancy cared not a whit whether I was on a slippery tussock or knee-deep in water. Four killed here; two red-coated thousands yonder! Sir Edward could have afforded a month of manœuvring for some other point of attack than this one. His haughtiness was a piece with Braddock's; so was the penalty.

Three ships were at last warped to the bank of the river; then, getting our mouldy regimental properties stowed, we thanked God for a blessed deliverance and sailed for Brazos Santiago, on the other side of the gulf.

A Baltimore clipper-built brig, new, sweet-smelling, clean, and fast, was assigned to Company H and two others, Lieutenant-Colonel Nave in command. The sea has always been kind to me. Throughout the transit I kept the deck without a qualm of the terrible *mal de mer*; and when, in the second night out, the lights of Brazos rose to view, I saw them with downright regret.

Of that outing—there may be too much familiarity in the word—there remain to me two distinct recollections. One of an enormous turtle on its back on the deck under a tarpaulin. To my landsman's eye the creature was a curiosity of itself; what stamped it on my memory, however, was the use and treatment to which it was put. Twice each day of the voyage the cook resorted to it to supply the officers' table—in the morning for steak, in the afternoon for soup—and when we landed the animal was alive.

The moonlight of the nights was of a whiteness to shut out the stars. Once I was roused from sleep and



a three-mast merchantman

brought to my feet thrilled through and through. A strange object within pistol-shot was moving swiftly in a direction the opposite of ours. It seemed indefinitely large and high. The silence of its going deepened the mystery. It acted as if self-controlled. Then I realized that it was permitted me to see a spectacle fast disappearing, and the most imposing and majestic of the apparitions of the sea—a three-mast merchantman, full-rigged, every sail set, and laden so deep that the light waves gave it no lateral motion. On it went, glacial white, mountain high, deathly still, a spectral, gliding glory of moonlit space. Whence was it? Whither bound? Whom did it serve? It passed, vanished, and made no sign. When now and then the curious ask me of the beautiful things I have seen, even the most beautiful, I astonish them by honoring that ship. My standards of the sublime are few—it is one of them.

## II

Brazos—Death of Reck—The camp at the mouth of the Rio Grande  
—Sickness—Suffering—Burials—Major Lane appeals to General  
Taylor for relief.

THE brig laid off shore during the night. Next morning, early, I went on deck to take a look at Brazos. An inlet scarce wider than a canal let into a bay three or four miles wide. On the farther shore of the bay a snow-white tower of fair elevation arose apparently out of the water. The tower I came to know as a light-house on Point Isabel, General Taylor's base of operations against Matamoras. A chain of low dunes or shifting sand-hills ran parallel with the beach, hiding the landscape behind it; and the dunes were naked, except that here and there a vine sprawled itself out too verdureless to cast a shadow. One hut, with a chimney of barrels, half buried in a sea of driftage, and curtained round-about by hides drying in the wind and sun, was all that spoke of human habitation. There, they told me, Padre Island terminated, while all south of the inlet constituted Brazos de Santiago. No town, no grass, not a tree. Heavens, what an awakening!

Now, I did not keep a diary, and it is too late to invent one—this in relief of all who follow me through these pages. But my memory serves me respecting two orders—the first one from Brigadier-General Lane, and it sent us to Camp Belknap, ten miles above the mouth of the Rio Grande.

There I went one day to the river. With me were

Luther Reck and John Anderson, who had been for years my closest companions. Indeed, they enlisted to be with me as much as anything else. At home we had been given to the "dare" habit; and the deeper the water, the thinner the ice, the longer the run, the hotter the blaze, the more certain the challenge, which had with us an unlikeness to the ordinary practice in that the challenger was bound to go first.

The Rio Grande nearing the gulf is always angry-looking. That day it was in flood. We stood idling awhile on the bank. The sun was at noon, and hot. Then Anderson, "What do you say to a swim?"

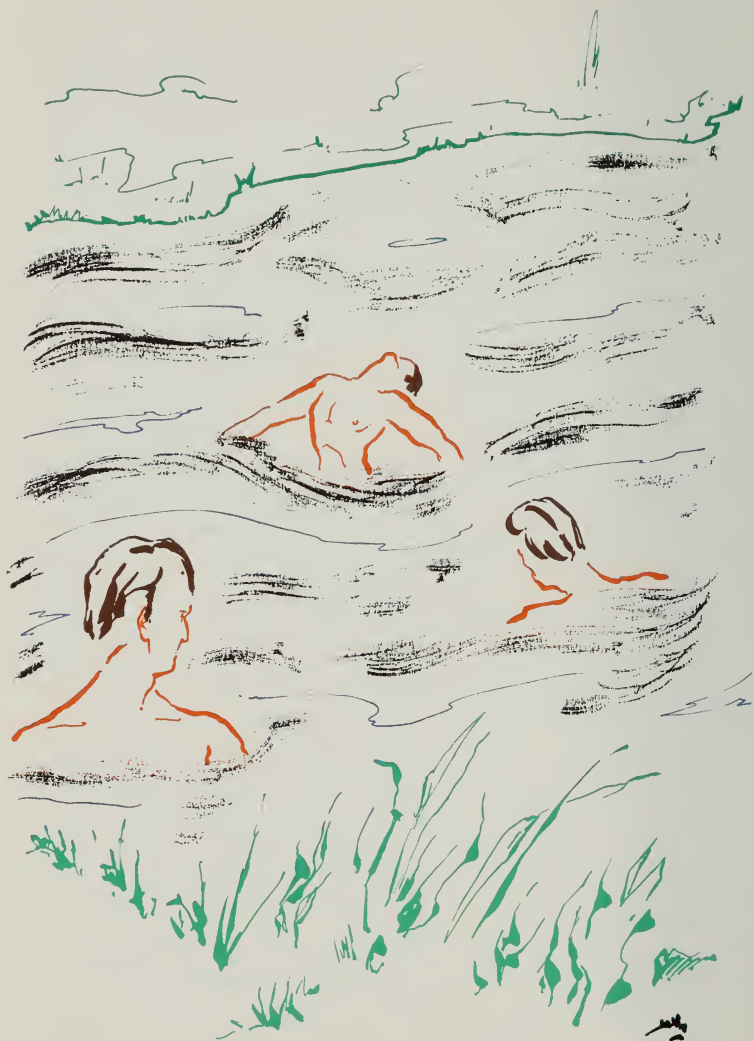
"No," I answered, "this is not White River."

Then he, old-time-like, "I dare you to follow me."

Our clothes were off in an instant. Anderson plunged in first. I called to them to go with the current diagonally. The pull was long and trying. At last we drew to the opposite shore, Reck behind, but striking out vigorously. All at once he screamed. We looked back in time to see him rise half out of the water, then sink. I marked the spot, and, with Anderson, made for it. The drowning generally rise twice; so we swam round and back and forth—uselessly, we never saw our friend again. He had gone down cramp-struck—down like a stone never to rise. We reported his loss in camp and to his mother, and it was many weeks before we, the survivors, recovered spirits enough to talk of the death. I doubt if Anderson ever forgot that he was the challenger.

The second order—from General Taylor, then in headquarters at Matamoras—sent the regiment into garrison at the mouth of the Rio Grande.

It is not amiss for me to say here that I accept the wisdom of the dispensations generally accredited to God as among the highest proofs of His being and good-



..to see him rise half out of the water, then sink..

ness. Had we known in advance—I speak illustratively—what all of misery and humiliation there was awaiting us in that camp to which we now marched, I think it not unlikely that despair would have unloosed every bond of discipline and sunk our eight hundred good men into an ungovernable mob. In all my reading of American wars, the colonial included, I cannot recall another instance of a command so wantonly neglected and so brutally mislocated. A description may be useful. If it prove unpleasant reading, I make no apology. They to take arms hereafter should have a standard by which to measure the worst conditions possible to their service.

The camp, it is to be said, was not of our choosing. We inherited it from the First Mississippi Volunteers, Colonel Jefferson Davis commanding. As we marched in, they took to steamboats going up the river. I remember yet the sense of desolateness that shocked me viewing the place for the first time.

On the right of the camp, defending it from the sea, were sand-dunes like those at Brazos; its left was a few hundred yards in remove from the river; on the north it faced a reach of land level as a floor, treeless, apparently interminable, and subject to overflow by the tides. Across the river a ragged Mexican hamlet nicknamed “Bagdad” harbored a band of smugglers. The landing, calling it such, afforded mooring for vessels, mostly lighters. Occasionally a steamboat came down from Matamoras, staying long enough to take on supplies. From Brazos the mails were sent to Point Isabel, thence to headquarters, wherever that might be, leaving delivery to us a thing of chance. McGahan, I think it is, describes the Kirghiz out of the world, as were we—only they were nomads.

All the drinking-water to be had was from the river,



a tepid mixture about thirty per cent. sand and the rest half yellow mud. Against the purgative effect of a full draught there was nothing available except a pill of opium.

The ration, of tri-weekly issue, consisted of beans, coffee, sugar, pickled pork, and flour or biscuit; no vegetables—not even onions. The biscuits, disk-shaped and alive with brown bugs, were often subjects of sarcastic play—the men on inspection frequently substituted pieces of them for gun-flints. Occasionally parties went hunting, returning sometimes with a maverick over-ripened in the portage home; our main reliance for fresh meat was shrimps taken in the river.

A monotony descended upon the camp—a monotony unrelieved as an arctic night, as telling on the spirit as the blue mist of the plague Weyman tells of in his *Gentleman of France*. Now and then we heard of operations by General Taylor. A steamboat-man would stray in among us with the news. General Taylor had set out from Matamoras for the up-country; then had taken Camargo, the enemy having abandoned it; and thereafter, with a regiment in garrison at Matamoras, there was not the slightest need of us where we were—none earthly. A post-guard of twenty men would have been ample to hold the mouth of the Rio Grande, admitting it an indispensable depot of supplies. Occasionally, too, an inspector came down and took a snap-look at our tents from the guard of his steamer. So, directly, there was not a soul among us so simple as not to see that we were practically in limbo; then, to complete the wretchedness of the situation, a disease planted itself in our midst.

A vulgar name and antidiarrhetic, I grant; yet he who has seen a man sicken and die of chronic diarrhœa shall always shudder at the name, though he live a



hundred years. How the scourge got into our camp, whether by the river, or by the spoiled pork we ate, calling it meat, or by the bad cookery which was the rule with the messes, or by all these causes in combination, which I think the most likely, were idle conjecturing. Not less idle would it be saying this one or that was responsible for its introduction. Let me rather tell how it wrought upon us.

The soldier may have been in perfect health the day we went into the camp, which, singularly, was never named; at roll-call, three weeks having passed, I notice a change in his appearance. His cheeks have the tinge of old gunny-sacks; under the jaws the skin is ween and flabby; his eyes are filmy and sinking; he moves listlessly; the voice answering the sergeant is flat; instead of supporting the gun at order arms, the gun is supporting him. Observing the signs, I know without asking that he has been to the surgeon, and that the surgeon gave him an opium pill—I know it from knowing that in the meagre schedule of medicines at command there is no other corrective for diarrhœa. Another week and his place in the ranks is vacant. A messmate answers for him. No need of looking for him in the hospital. The post is a fixed one, yet there is no hospital of any kind. It will go hard with him, one of six in a close tent, nine feet by nine, for the night will not bring him enough of blessed coolness to soothe the fever made burning through the day. His comrades not themselves sick are his nurses. They do their best, but their best is wanting, not least in the touch which every man once mortally ailing recollects as the divine belonging of mother or wife. A delicacy of any sort would be a relief; he prays for it pitifully, and they bring him the very food which laid him on his back in the first instance — bean-soup, unleavened slapjacks, and

bacon. Another week and he is giving his remnant of strength to decency. At last he has no vigor left; mind and will are down together; the final stage is come, and—the pen refuses to go on.

As to the loss of life, I cannot give the number. There were days when a dress parade with two hundred present was encouraging—weeks when funerals were so multiplied upon us that the hours between sunup and sundown were too few—that is, for the customary honors. Then night was drawn upon. There is no forgetting, try as I will, the effect of the dead-march rendered on life and muffled drum at night, heard first faintly and scarcely distinguishable from the distant monotone of breakers. And if, as sometimes happened, the corporal led his squad just outside my tent, the hour and the hush and darkness turned the music into a stunning tremolo of thunder.

Nor did our trials end always with the end of the sick man's life. The supply of lumber for coffins was soon exhausted; so were the gunboxes and staves of cracker barrels to which we next resorted; a little later we were driven to the use of blankets for shrouds. And even then the poor men were not always allowed their natural rest in the sands of the dunes where we laid them, for the winds, blowing fitfully, now a "norther," now from the gulf, thought nothing, it seemed, of uncovering a corpse and exposing it naked.

Skill in pathology is not required to divine the effect of such conditions upon the men. Probably there were not ten of them in the regiment who had seen the ocean or any part of it before taking ship at New Orleans. For a while to walk along the beach, to chase the crabs and be in turn chased by the breakers, to gather shells and dissect the stranded nautili was jolly fun, being all so strange. But the fun was short-lived, and when

it wore out there was nothing left to do except speculate upon what was to become of them.

Once in a while some other regiment would come from Brazos. The sight of them marching by, flags flying, drums beating, and hurrying aboard boats as if they smelled the contagion in our camp or feared an order for them to stop and take our place, was maddening, and presently led to a general belief that we were victims of an unfriendly discrimination at headquarters of the army or that there were traitors among us. Still—and I write it with becoming loyalty—there was never a round-robin or a refusal of duty, never so much as a military propriety disregarded.

As to responsibility for all this suffering and death, I only know it was wrong to blame Colonel Drake. All in his power to do towards saving the well from falling sick and the sick from dying he did. One day—it was when General Taylor was at Matamoras—the colonel sent for Major Lane. I heard the conversation between them.

The colonel said: “Surgeon J——s has just been here to report that the supply of medicines with which he started from New Orleans is almost gone, and that his repeated requisitions for more have received no attention. If kept here much longer, he says the sick will all die. The condition is too bad. I am ready to try an unsoldierly thing.”

“What is that?” the major asked.

“To go to Matamoras and see General Taylor.”

“Without leave?”

“Yes.”

The major shook his head doubtfully.

“What will you say to him?”

“That there is no reason in keeping the regiment here, now that Matamoras is ours. I think he should

know, too, exactly what its condition is. There certainly can be no harm, then, in asking General Taylor to let us go up the river with the column of advance, or, at least, change to a more healthful camp."

The major answered, promptly: "Very well. I will go with you, if you say so."

They went next day. The major's plea, it was said, was unusually fervid. Unfortunately, the general was not used to such eloquence; either that, or to his perceptions, dulled by long service, the solicitation was as much a military offence as outright protest. Anyhow, we were left to our misery.

### III

The march to Monterey—Attempt to go with the army—Paris C. Dunning—An instructor in tactics—The episode with Stipp.

GENERAL TAYLOR, as I now remember, set out from Matamoras against Monterey in September. Up to the last minute I persisted in believing he would take the First Indiana along with him. At length a man of the commissariat gave the *coup de grâce* to my hope. He told me in an interview that the army already under orders to move was greater than could be well supplied beyond Camargo. To Colonel Drake he showed memoranda of an estimate of rations for the expedition pared down to the narrowest limit. A little figuring on the basis of the estimate was conclusive. *We had been left out.*

It is hard for me now to understand the state of mind into which I then fell. The operations of the army filled my thought. My imagination painted them in the most exaggerated colors. The route would lead hundreds of miles into the interior of the country, by rivers, along fertile plains, over mountains, through villages and towns, ending at the City of Mexico, said to be the most beautiful capital in the world. There would, of course, be opposition and occasionally a battle. By report the people inland were superior to such as we were meeting on the frontier, and the superiority kept increasing in steady ratio. If my fancy disdained the soberness of fact, if it permitted no suggestion of danger or defeat, if it wilfully converted deserts into

gardens, and adobe towns into fair Seviles, it should be remembered apologetically that my story of *The Man-at-Arms* had been of Spain and Spaniards, and that in the manuscript of my new work I had left Cortés on the causeway about to make his first entrance into Tenochtitlan.

To this mood, of the intensity of which I was not at all conscious, I lay one of the most serious of the follies marking my beginning.

There are young fellows who should be kept apart, a continent between them; unfortunately, the reasons for keeping them apart are generally reasons for their coming together. Such were Charley ——— and I. He was a second lieutenant, like myself, though a trifle older. He, too, had an almost insane desire to see a battle; our conferences upon the subject had been latterly of daily occurrence. I went to him now with the intelligence that our regiment was to be left out, and said that to be in at the taking of Monterey we must cut loose and do for ourselves. He agreed with me. Then, to raise money for the venture, we decided to sell our pay accounts to date. The sutler, we thought, would be happy to discount them. If we could not get passage on a boat, we could buy horses and overtake the cavalry who were to march overland.

Now nothing could have been more certain than that our appearance with troops anywhere would have led to inquiry and to our instant arrest as deserters. We considered that possibility — so much is due to our common-sense—but agreed that it was one of the risks of the scheme. We argued, also, that we were going with the army, not away from it.

The sutler upon whom we waited offering to sell our pay accounts was Paris C. Dunning, whose portrait may be seen in the gallery of governors, part of the state

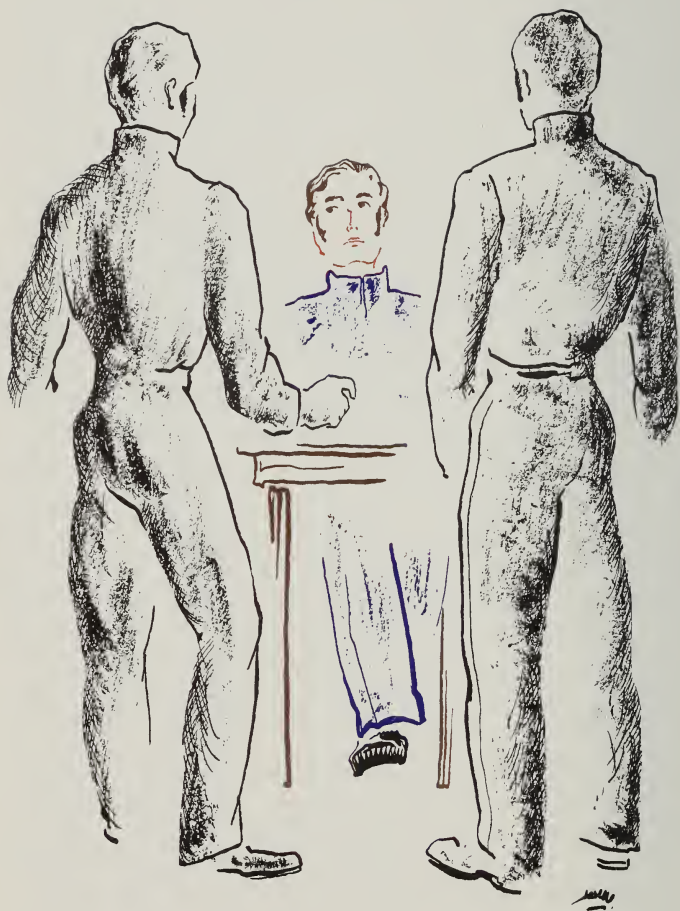


library at Indianapolis, a rare presentment of intelligence and amiability. He heard us in his private tent; and when we were through he gave way to a violent fit of laughter, as he well might; becoming serious presently, he refused peremptorily to buy our accounts; then, after lecturing us upon the enormity of the military offence we were contemplating, the results of which would be disgrace to our families and friends, he concluded: "Now, young gentlemen, if you pledge me your words of honor to drop this project, your coming to me shall never be known; if you refuse, I will at once notify Colonel Drake. I give you three minutes for decision."

We looked at each other a moment. Each saw that without money the journey was impossible, and that there was no person else in camp of whom we could safely ask it. We tried to laugh; he was serious; and directly we gave him the parole. He kept the faith with us, and I still hold him in grateful recollection.

The snubbing Colonel Drake and Major Lane had from General Taylor must have been a severe trial to those worthy officers. Nevertheless, thinking the regiment would be better of employment as a diversion from its hard conditions, the colonel had published hours of service, requiring squad and company drills in the forenoon and battalion drills in the afternoon. Then, curiously, I dropped into disfavor with the men of my company—in plainer speech, I became desperately unpopular.

Our arm, it will be recalled, was a heavy muzzle-loading musket of Revolutionary pattern, and the tactics (*Scott's Infantry*) smothered by details. Only a student with positive aptitude could master the latter. Loading, for instance, other than at will, was by twelve commands. If, on this account, there was need of patience on the part of an instructor, how much greater



He heard us in his private tent.



the need on the part of the soldier, out in the sun, his person swathed in a closely buttoned woollen coat overlaid with three broad belts—one at the waist, the others crossing his breast and back! Imagine the man listening with attention, his blood at boiling-pitch! It turned out, in short, that my superior company officers had neither taste nor inclination to attempt the tactics, and they threw the duty of instructing the company upon me.

The progress made won me compliments. Had I been older, my intentions would have been credited to me; but men do not like being taught by boys, so it befell as said—I became generally odious, and there were threats of shooting me. The circumstance was the more regretful because I was then too inexperienced to know that the anger which caused my fall is a malady peculiar to recruits—a malady less serious because it eventually cures itself.

This, to my great relief, did not last. The incident which restored me to favor is stranger even than the circumstance that caused its loss.

The up-country ten or fifteen miles from our camp was all a saline plain broken here and there by what we called islands. These, rising abruptly from the dead level twenty or thirty feet, and a mile or two across, were covered with a rank growth of vines, shrubs, and pretentious trees, the verdure of which furnished cropping for wild cattle the year round. They were also good haunts for Mexican guerillas, who, sneaking across the river, were occasionally seen on our side.

Now, I was of those who when off duty killed time hunting—it was such a relief to get away from the horrors which locked the regiment in so terribly.

An account having reached me of an island unusually large, with vegetation more than semi-tropical and a

spring of cool, white water at one side, I thought it too distant for the easy-going forager, and that possibly it might be stocked with game enough to pay. So, with four men and the necessary leave, I set out one day to try it. We provided ourselves with guns and cartridges, a frying-pan, a coffee-pot, haversacks well filled, and three canteens of water to the man. Just as we passed the line of sentinels private Perry Stipp came up and asked to go with us.

Stipp, it is for the saying now, was physically and morally a bogie who ought not to have passed muster. He was humped before and behind, had arms like a gorilla, eyes limpidly blue, a fighter unwhipped, the bulldozer of the regiment. More particularly, he was ringleader in the war on me; and in threatening to kill me he had not thought it needful to speak privately. The colonel had been advised to discharge him as a lunatic who might some day take it into his head to run amuck. In fairness, however, the advice was not mine.

I looked Stipp in the eyes, thinking of his threats, and told him to provide himself as we were and overtake us. Whatever his motive in asking to go with me, it seemed a good time to have it out with him, only I should be careful.

The men, glad like myself to get away from camp, talked freely while we were going—all except Stipp, and him I kept in front, always in eye. About four o'clock the island we were seeking rose in sight. A profusion of palmettos, both cabbage-head and of the fan variety, gave it character. It was also bolder in elevation and of broader spread.

“Hello!”

This was from Stipp—his first word. We all stopped.

“What is it?” I asked.

"There—don't you see?"

Some men came out of the thicket on the edge of the bluff. There were sombreros among them, and parti-colored ponchos, and guns glistened distinctly.

"Mexicans," Stipp said next, bringing his gun to the ground. I caught his eyes, bright and steady as candles burning in a well, and knew, instinct interpreting, that he thought he had me in a corner. It was for me to say forward or back; if back, my standing was gone. I resolved to turn the table and try him.

"Are they Mexicans?" I asked.

"I should say so," Kise answered, speaking for the party.

"And there are twenty of them, at least," Edwards added.

"Well," I said, "if there are so many armed Mexicans near camp as this, the colonel should know it. Now you four stay here, ready to make for camp—Stipp, you and I will go on."

A queerish expression which I took for doubt or surprise appeared on his face; but he raised his gun and we started.

"Look!" he said, as if I were not looking.

The party on the bluff disappeared; after which they were to be imagined in ambush.

Two hundred yards from where the unknown were last seen—and not a shot. Were they making sure of us?

One hundred yards. My flesh began to crawl. Stipp's teeth were clinched.

Now we were at the foot of the bluff, and it was time for the *finale*. Then Stipp stopped.

"Not here, Stipp," I said, knowing his nerve going. "We are dead men if we stop here."

He fell in behind me.



With my cap I waved...

The ascent was difficult, and on the top—nobody. With my cap I waved come on to the four still where they had been left.

They joined us and we all set out to find the Mexicans. The sun was going down when we reached the brink of the island on the opposite side to that by which we had come. Then we noticed a smoke rising. Creeping on, and looking down from the height, we saw a party from our own regiment out hunting like ourselves. We had magnified their number nearly a third. Some of them wore sombreros and blankets Mexican in style. They had found the spring, and were making coffee and roasting veal for supper. We joined them, of course.

In camp a few days afterwards there was a row and an arrest. I inquired about them. Some one had opened on me in Stipp's presence, and he thrashed the man so he had to be carried off. Stripp also gave notice to everybody who didn't like Wallace that he was for him.

That was enough. The wind veered and blew my way again.

## IV

The march to Walnut Springs—The church robbery at Cervalvo—  
The inquiry—The doctor's confession on the return.

At last General Robert Patterson set foot in the camp at the mouth of the Rio Grande, and, after an informal review of the regiment, gave Colonel Drake an order in writing to proceed to Walnut Springs near Monterey, where General Taylor had headquarters.

To Camargo by river about two hundred and ten miles. From Camargo by land to Walnut Springs one hundred and eighty miles. The sick to be left in hospital at Matamoras. It may be believed when that programme was published there was celebration, every man according to his bent—the religiously disposed thanking God, while those of another tendency hastened to the sutlers for flowing bowls. It may be believed, also, that there was not an hour lost in getting away from the scourged post. As we had relieved the First Mississippi, the Second Mississippi relieved us—but not to stay.

When my father bade me, in the farewell at Indianapolis, to come home a man, I am sure he did not leave the injunction with me thinking I could so far forget him or myself as to become a party to the robbery of a church. That, however, was exactly what happened at the town of Cervalvo on the road from Camargo to Monterey. The story will be admirably illustrative of two phases of life—one, how a man can involuntarily aid



and abet in the commission of a crime shocking to none more than to himself; the other, the degree to which enthusiasm in the practice of an honorable profession can pervert one's moral nature.

Cervalvo, on account of its fame for beauty, was one of the inspiring promises of the country between Camargo and Monterey; and on reaching it the promise was so generously realized that a day of rest was taken there. I still recollect how, being unused to mountains, those about that site seemed to glorify the earth. Nor did I wonder less at the inhabitants showing no alarm at sight of us. Indeed, I could not understand them until it was explained that there was a padre up in the cathedral, a really holy man, who exercised a kind of paternal government over the members of his diocese, and had such influence that they only knew of the war by standing in their doors and seeing the armies go by.

We had with us a contract surgeon from Georgia—Macon, I believe—educated, agreeable, unusually gifted in smothering his “r’s”—a veritable Knight of the Dissecting Table. His references had been excellent.

Shortly after it was given out that the regiment would remain at Cervalvo for the day, the doctor came and proposed to me that we go and see the cathedral, an overture to which I was the more willing because the padre had already called on the colonel with an interpreter, and, while paying his respects, considerately said he would be pleased if the officers would do him the honor to walk through the house. It was quite old, and he was confident the pictures would interest them.

The air that morning being of the mountain variety, I put on an overcoat, while the doctor wrapped himself in a cloak of dark cloth.

At the door we were met by a Mexican, bareheaded, clothed from head to foot in a gown tied at the waist.

He could not speak English nor we Spanish. I was afterwards told he was not a priest, but a custodian called sacristan. The first thing he would have us see was a room on the right of the door of entrance. We found it spacious, well lighted, scrupulously clean, cold, and unfurnished except with a table on which, under a glass cover globular at the top, there was a human skull. I noticed on being taken to the table that the guide twice crossed himself, from which it was a fair inference that the relic was of special sanctity. Why it was so he could not tell us, though he tried to with earnestness. The glass cover was free of dust, the skull itself white, perfect, and a remarkably attractive specimen. Its owner must have been of high endowments, mentally and morally—that is, if there be verity in phrenology.

We passed from the chamber of the skull, the sacristan leading the way. As I went out the doctor whispered to me: "Follow him. I will join you directly."

The pictures were not all equally good. A few were of masterly production. While we were examining the altar, the candlesticks of silver, the spangled effigies of the Virgin and Child, the guide doing his best in explanation, talking volubly, his soul intent, the doctor joined us. Finally we took leave, the sacristan going to the door with us.

On the way to camp the doctor seemed in high spirits. He criticised the pictures; they were daubs, he said, some of them vilely irreligious in treatment. He laughed at the custodian, and denounced priests generally as frauds and hypocrites—preachers of ideas libellous of God. Within the lines we separated, each going to his quarters.

In an hour or thereabouts the padre reappeared in camp accompanied by the sacristan and the interpreter.





a table on which there was a human skull.

Seeing them go to the colonel's tent, I went there, too. Besides the colonel, the major and the adjutant were present. The visitors were excited. The sacristan at sight of me whispered to his superior, who thenceforward kept me in observation.

This is the substance of what the padre said to the colonel evolved slowly through the interpreter. In Mexico and other Roman Catholic countries, he said, it was customary to render honors to the memory of deceased founders of churches and cathedrals. Their bodies were laid away with impressive ceremonies. In time the skulls were taken up, and kept in the edifices of their building for the veneration of communicants through generations. The exalted father to whom the world was indebted for the cathedral of Cervalvo had received such honors. Only that morning his skull had been in its usual place on exhibition under glass in the first room at the right-hand after-entrance of the holy house. But now, the padre proceeded, the relic was not to be found, though the most diligent search had been made for it. Immediately that the disappearance had been reported to him, he hurried to make it known to the colonel, not doubting that he would exercise his authority in effecting discovery of the robbers and return of the relic. The prayers at the old altar were of value, and they should be for his excellency the colonel as for a second founder.

The colonel asked the padre gravely if he wished to be understood as accusing any of his officers or men. The padre replied diplomatically that he had not knowledge to justify a direct accusation; his object was merely recovery of the skull, and he could see no offence in desiring inquiry to be made of such officers as had been to the cathedral that morning. He was confident they would all reply honorably to questions. He begged to

add that the keeper of the house had shown him two young gentlemen who had been through it within an hour and a half, of whom one had worn an overcoat, the other a cloak, and it was directly after their departure that the loss had been noticed.

"Could the keeper recognize them?" the colonel asked.

The padre looked at me, and returned, "The sacristan here who guided them through the interior tells me the officer at your excellency's side is one of them."

This was bluntly done; but repressing every show of feeling as well as I could, all eyes being upon me, I requested the interpreter to ask the padre if he meant to charge me with the offence. The padre made haste to say no. Thanking him, I then admitted having been conducted by the guide present. I admitted having worn an overcoat, and requested permission to go and get it. Returning with it on, I asked the guide if this was the coat. He said it was at least of a like kind.

"Were you not with me from my entrance to my going out?"

"Yes."

"Did you not attend me and my companion to the door?"

"Yes, sir."

"Look at me now with the coat on," I said, stepping and turning before him—"look, and explain how it was possible for me to have walked with you, stopping at the altar and the pictures, and come away with a bulky thing like the skull under my coat, which was without cape, as you now see it."

His replies were accepted as conclusive of my innocence, and the affair was in the way of a happy ending when Major Lane ventured a question of me.

"You had company to the cathedral, I think you said?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Dr. ———."

I have seen the expression, half a smile, that came over the major's face then, on the faces of lawyers when in cross-examination they thought they had struck a promising pointer.

"What kind of a coat did the doctor wear?"

"He wore a cloak," I returned.

The major and the colonel exchanged glances. Both of them saw a motive in the doctor which I could not have had, since it was professional; they also saw how an object like a skull, which was of size, if not weight, could have been concealed under the loose folds of a cloak. The colonel sent his orderly to request Dr. ——— to come to him immediately.

There was an explanation when the doctor came, during which his countenance was a study. He confessed having gone to the cathedral with me wearing a cloak, and that he had seen the skull under the glass cover. He even admitted thinking, while looking at it, how ornamental it would be under such a case in his office at home, and how useful to students and others interested in craniology. Then, with becoming vehemence, he denied the taking, and requested the colonel to have his tent and effects searched. That the padre might be satisfied, he invited him to be one of the examiners. In short, the impression left by the new suspect was favorable to him. I was confident of his innocence.

Nevertheless, the colonel sent for the officer of the day, and presently that gentleman, with the sacristan as witness, overhauled the doctor's quarters, discovering nothing like the relic in question; after which the visitors left, the padre profuse in thanks and apologies.

Some days afterwards, while descending the Rio Grande going back to Matamoras, as will be narrated, Dr. ——— was detailed for duty on the same boat with myself. From the hour his quarters had been searched, he had not alluded to the affair of the skull; but as I was passing the door of his state-room once, he called to me, and I went in.

"See here," he said to me. "Something to interest you."

Lifting the lid of a box doing duty as a trunk, he took out a parcel of bulk with wrappings of heavy brown paper and a stout hempen cord. A little work at the tie of the cord, and he produced the skull and gave it into my hands.

"Good God, Dr. ———! And you did do it?" I said, shocked clear through.

He laughed heartily, then explained:

"It's a beauty, isn't it? I had it under my cloak all the time that Mexican idiot was showing us round. I knew pursuit would follow; and quick as I got into camp I made a package of the find, dropped it into a mess-kettle, and gave a teamster half a dollar to hide it in his feed-box. Not wishing to compromise you, I didn't let you into the secret sooner. A lovely piece of furniture for my office. What good was it doing there? Think of it in my hands! Practical science is of more worth than sentiment. You'll say nothing, of course."

I kept his secret.

## V

Order to return to former camp—General Taylor's act—Lieutenant-Colonel Nave resigns—Major Lane elected to his place—The killing of Captain Thornton—Carvajal—The attack on Old Reynosa—The town spared—Gratitude of the women—The serenade.

THE last afternoon of the long march under General Patterson's order came. The world and the sky had turned to dust since we left Cervalvo, so there was but one hue to be seen, look where we might—that of dirty ochre. And now it was three o'clock in the afternoon, and only six miles to Walnut Springs, where we were to become in reality a part of an army, a consummation long devoutly wished.

Our feet were sore, but that was nothing; our hearts were light. Suddenly the column jammed into the advance-guard, and there was a halt. Then a courier rode to the colonel and delivered a despatch to him, and he read it—read it twice. The second time he kept his saddle unsteadily, his face much redder than usual. Something had hit him hard, yet he managed to give commands; and when we were faced front, aligned, and brought arms ordered, he began to read the despatch just received, but choked, and called the adjutant, a young man, who took the paper and finished it; and when he was through we all stood dazed. Some demonstration would have ensued, I am sure, but the colonel recovering made haste to put us in motion by the left flank, whereas we had been marching right in front. In plainer words, easy for people not soldiers,



Walnut Springs, to which we had been sending our thoughts bright with high hopes, was now behind us, and we were to double upon our tracks back, clear back, to the accursed camp at the mouth of the Rio Grande, eating, as it were, the three hundred and ninety miles we had come.

The order had proceeded, of course, from General Taylor. In all the files thus turned back there was not a man so dull as not to know that he and his regiment were being punished; on the other hand, had the brightest of the lot been asked what the punishment was for, he could not have replied with a suggestion, though his life depended upon it. My own opinion now, with experience to help me, is that General Taylor was governed by one of two motives: either he was reminding Colonel Drake of the unofficer-like request he and his major had made of him at Matamoras, or he intended a reprimand of General Patterson for his assumption of authority in giving the order of march.<sup>1</sup>

Whichever surmise is correct, one thing is not less true—the general who could serve innocent soldiers of his command so scurvily, allowing them under such circumstances to get within two hours of his camp, after a movement of such length and labor, must have been of a soul which no successes could have made great.

The proof of discipline is obedience, not cheerful obedience. After a while I suppose the regiment came to my way of thinking—that we had an outing anyhow.

<sup>1</sup> Years afterwards, when under command of the same General Robert Patterson, ascertaining that he remembered giving Colonel Drake the order to march to Walnut Springs, I asked if he had General Taylor's authority to give it. He answered no; that he acted from pity, having never seen men in the service in such a state of neglect and suffering. He doubted if General Taylor actually knew of the condition of the regiment, and upon that assumption he had acted.



Lieutenant-Colonel Nave, in deep resentment, resigned, whereupon the four hundred and odd survivors hastened to elect Major Lane to the vacancy.

On the way to Camargo we were overtaken by another order from General Taylor materially modifying the first one. Colonel Drake was to send two companies of the regiment to the mouth of the Rio Grande; with the rest he was to take command of Matamoras. This put us all in better spirits.

The descent of the San Juan and the Rio Grande rivers being now before us, Company H, with three other companies, embarked on the steamboat *Enterprise*, Captain Milroy in command of the detachment. Four days were thought time enough to make Matamoras, and on that supposition rations were issued. At the close of the fifth day, we were scarcely half-way to our destination, and hanging with our boat's nose over a low bank. A famine struck us, and it became necessary to forage. Five men went out in search of cattle. Two of them came back soon to tell how the party had been ambushed, and that they had barely escaped, having left three of their comrades dead.

The captain of the boat was taken into consultation. He knew the river and the region, and from him it was learned that Old Reynosa, a town of bad repute, lay off the river three or four miles, and that it was the haunt of General Jesus Maria Carvajal, whom everybody recollected as the famous guerilla who lured Captain Thornton into the fatal lariat-trap down by Fort Brown in the beginning of the war. The inference was safe, we thought, that Carvajal and his band had murdered our foragers and were then in the town.

Captain Milroy now showed himself to advantage; only instead of ordering us, he buckled on his sword, jumped ashore, and called for volunteers, declaring he

would recover the bodies of our men first, and then burn the town, and if we could catch Carvajal, the natives should be treated to a hanging in imitation of Haman's. The four companies responded to a man. Even the boatmen begged for guns that they too might go. One company was left to keep the steamer.

The dead men were found horribly mutilated. Tearing through the brush, then, we reached the town, where, as a glance disclosed, the advantages were all against us. First, a stretch of meadow-land; then a bluff fifteen or twenty feet high, its face gullied by rains; at the edge of the bluff on top a palisade of tree-trunks set side and side, and taller than our heads; behind the palisade the enemy—how many we could not see. I could see their guns glistening in the sunlight. So, by the signs, I had stumbled on my first fight, though at the moment too much excited to recognize the fact.

There was a brief halt while Milroy arranged the attack. Then, in double files, and with a yell, we rushed across the meadow. I was in command of Company H. Heavens! What furnace heat there was in that go! We reached the foot of the bluff, and not a shot had been fired at us. How I got up the face of the bluff I do not know; how over the tall palisading I would never have known had not some of the men afterwards spoken of the boosting they gave me. And then the disappointment! The Mexicans ran out of the town into the chaparral on the other side faster than we could get into it.

The barking of dogs, the only creatures that offered fight, and the screaming of women and children running in and out of the doorways, were stunning, but not enough to keep us from following the *ladrones* and pelting them with fire and yells. At the edge of the chaparral they stopped once and gave us a ragged round

that spent itself over our heads. That stop was of better avail to our quick-sighted ready squirrel-hunters.

Now the sight of men lying in their blood on the ground, one killed and four wounded, was new to me; and when we got to them and the wretches began praying to us in their unknown tongue for life, my feelings, I confess, underwent a sudden revulsion, and out of pity I would have interfered for them had there been any need of interference. The change, which was general on our side, may have been accelerated by the women who ran to the scene from all parts, and on their knees, and with tears and the most piteous moans and cries, joined in the supplications of the wounded. Then, when Captain Milroy ordered the men to be carried into the houses, and it was done instantly and tenderly, the women ran to their kitchens and got us dinners of baked beans, corn-cakes, and *carne seca* (dried beef). Nor was that all. When we paid them for what they gave us, I thought they would have been glad to have us stay longer.

Carvajal escaped,<sup>1</sup> and the town was not burned. Regaining our boat without molestation, we buried our dead on the bank of the river. Experience had hardened us not a little against death and burial; but thinking of it now I can see all the grewsomeness of that sepulture. Poor boys! They had their mourners at home, if not there.

We were lucky enough while returning to secure four beeves, fat for that part of the world; and the current of the river having kindly washed the sand and loam

<sup>1</sup> Further on it will appear that at one time later I had much to do with General Carvajal. I asked once why he did not fire on us while we were crossing the meadow. His answer was a good one. "I saw you had men enough to take the town, and thought it best not to fight on account of the women and children."



... the women who ran to the scene from all parts .....

from under the keel of the steamboat, it was soon in motion. In the evening of the tenth day of the voyage, the four companies disembarked at Matamoras none the worse of the wear.

There was little to except to in our new quarters. We needed a rest, and had it; even drilling in the plaza in the heart of the city, treated as work, had its social counterbalances. *Bailes* were of nightly occurrence. The ultra-fashionable of New York and Boston might have smiled at the Mexican belles who were the bright lights on such occasions; nevertheless, in waltzing only a belle of Madrid could have excelled them. To natural grace and perfected sense of time, they added matchless endurance.

Those days in Matamoras, enlivened as they were by incidents illustrative of the life led there, were not without pleasantness.

To me, at least, one of the most delightful and touching occurrences was a serenade. The city lay in the hush of midnight, deeper for the military occupation it was undergoing. Much I fear even the sentinels slept on their posts. Suddenly a burst of music rose clear and high through the silence. The harmony rushing wavelike into the quarters of my company—the legislative hall of the state of Tamalipas—startled us from sleep, and we hurried to the balcony overlooking the plaza and listened. The air was “Hail Columbia,” in magnificent rendition by a brass-band. We peered through the moonlight, straining to make the musicians out, but they were under the towers of the church opposite draped impenetrably in shadow. What band was it? We had none. How came it there? I heard with tears in my eyes and an unwonted commotion in my heart. I was transported home, and stung to the quick by a reminder of how rapidly it was wearing out





in my recollection. The players gave but the one number, and at its conclusion disappeared mysteriously as they had come. Morning brought an explanation. A steamboat with the band of the Second United States Cavalry aboard had touched for supplies at the city, landing in the night, and, having an hour at disposal, the men had mounted their horses and stolen into the plaza. That there were such depth and touch in the old air had never before entered my thought.

There are few things that amuse me more than the freshness of youth, a quality which I now suspect must have been mine in large share; for what else was this?

Urvea, a Mexican general, appeared between Matamoras and Victoria with four thousand lancers, sent down by President Santa Anna to raid General Taylor's long line of supplies. It was reported, also, that Urvea was watching to strike us. This put Colonel Drake on his mettle. Among other precautions taken, he ditched the corner of the plaza, and had us practice with the six-pounder field-pieces, the target being two cracker barrels set one on the other. I was out with the guns one day and it came my turn to shoot. A flock of sheep happened to be moving across the flat about three hundred yards away, grazing as they went. Calling for a spherical case-shot, while it was being rammed home I made a hasty guess at the distance and the elevation required to reach the flock; then, all being ready, I suddenly swung the gun round, took a glance over it, and fired. There was mutton next day in nearly every mess-kettle, and compliments poured in on me in a shower. The third day, however, the colonel sent me his compliments. Would I please come to him? A matter of business. I complied, of course,



and he put a bill in my hand from the owner of the slaughtered sheep. I protested, but without avail. The shot cost me more than half a month's pay; and thenceforth I knew a regimental laugh peculiar in that it takes such a time to cool and quit.

## VI

The First Indiana at Walnut Springs—General Taylor—The camp at Walnut Springs—A visit to Monterey—An adventure in the chaparral—A test of courage—The first panic.

AGAIN the First Indiana drew near Walnut Springs, still the site of General Taylor's headquarters. The exact date I do not remember; yet it must have been in February, the first week, I think. This time the order bore the sign-manual of Bliss, adjutant-general.

Over a thousand miles of marching—three times by the same route—and now, as in the first up-country movement, we had the same incentive to keep us in heart—a hope of battle. The whole region was rife with news of Santa Anna at San Luis Potosi assembling an army to come down and put an end to the audacious Gringos.

With the exception of Colonel Drake and Lieutenant-Colonel Lane, none of the regiment had seen General Taylor. What has been from the beginning will go on, I suppose, to the end; a hero will always be more than a man; so, although the general had, as we thought, dealt us great unkindness, and needlessly stored the dunes at the mouth of the Rio Grande with our dead, we had a craving to see him; and despite the nickname, "Rough and Ready," it was impossible for us to think of him entirely divested of pomp and circumstance. His tent must be out of the usual, a central hall, as it were, of a town of tents. Horsemen and horses must

be at his door signifying martial authority at home. In a word, the feeling was general that even before approaching his quarters there would be something to advise us, without the asking, that we were near the WILL which was law unto us—something though but a sword-belt or a mien to bid us, “Here—look here—this is HE!”

Moving forward with lengthening steps, and drawing nearer and nearer, we strained our eyes to catch every point in the surroundings of the hero. A tall white flag-staff was the first thing observable. A flag floated from it high up, but the flag was dingy and worn. That was a disappointment. Next, back of the staff, fifteen or twenty steps, perhaps, we noticed two marquees one in rear of the other, a fly before the first answering for a porch; and they, too, were dingy and discolored. Under the fly there were a few camp-stools, a small table, also dirty, and a deal bench, long and straight-backed. No orderlies in trim dress uniforms; not even a sentinel stiffly stalking a beat suggested state thereabout. These HIS quarters?

Presently, without halting, we broke into column of companies—quickly and without a break we did it, and then advanced intervals and alignment perfected. Where was HE?

Now the head of the column was passing the dingy flag on the tall pole. One by one in quick succession the companies reached the prescribed saluting distance. Officers glanced to the right. *Their swords remained at carry.* So, also, the color-bearer swept by, his nose, like his flag, mutinously in the air. And all there asked themselves, anxiously, Where is HE?

It came my turn to salute from my place behind the rear rank. I readjusted the sword-grip in my hand, and looked for the reviewing officer out of the corner

of my eye first, then broadly. Leaning lazily against the butt of the white pole, I saw a man of low stature, dressed in a blouse unbuttoned and so faded it could not be said to have been of any color, a limp-bosomed shirt certainly not white,<sup>1</sup> a hang-down collar without a tie of any kind, trousers once light blue now stripeless, rough marching shoes, foxy from long wear—such the dress of the man. He also wore a slouch wool hat drawn down low over a face unshaven, and dull and expressionless as the wooden Indian's habitually on duty in front of tobacco-shops. I did not salute him, but, like all who had preceded me, and all who came after me, passed on wondering, Where can HE be?

Looking backward once, I noticed Colonel Drake riding to the man with the slouch hat. There is reason to think he stopped with him and dismounted. Still I plodded on grumbling to myself, "HE is treating us shabbily, as usual."

That evening, when the good colonel's tent was pitched, I went to see him, unable to contain my indignation.

"Colonel," I said, "did General Taylor tell you that he would review us as we marched past his quarters?"

"Yes. I sent the adjutant to notify him of our coming. Didn't you see him?"

"No, sir, or I would have saluted."

The colonel's face sobered as he said, "Nobody saluted."

"Why, there was nobody to salute."

<sup>1</sup> This is to give the impression made upon me *at the time*. Since then I came to know that general officers are not entirely exempt from the effects of field life in actual campaigning. Their uniforms fade, the buttons dim, and sometimes their shirts get soiled. Though, if the latter happen when the *gentlemen* is at a fixed post where change of linen is at command, as in the instance given, one must look for the reason in the personal preference of the individual.



leaning lazily against the butt of the white pole .....

"Yes there was."

"Who?"

"*The man leaning against the flag-staff.*"

"That General Taylor? I took him to be a teamster."

We cleared first a spacious parade-ground; then our encampment became beautiful. A stream of spring-water ran through a grove of pecan-trees hardly distinguishable from oaks majestic, as we fancy Druidical temples. A range of mountains, nearly always cloud-capped, in the southeast, Monterey nestling beneath it, lifted the horizon in that direction. Nearer by rose Saddle Mountain, a solitary pyramidal peak accessible to climbers with muscles of steel. The purer the air the bluer the sky—with Walnut Springs hard-by Monterey one has not to go to Italy to test the saying. And yet camp life went on as usual. We did little day after day but buckle the disciplinary harness tighter about us. For now it was an assured thing—everybody said it—we were to be in the coming battle, the greatest of the war.

I have been often asked if I were ever scared. It seems now that an answer may be found in an incident of occurrence to me while the regiment lay at Walnut Springs.

A paymaster arrived in Monterey, and a number of the lieutenants requested to be allowed to go to the city and interview him. Unfortunately, the time set covered my turn to be officer of the guard; but by much importunity, and the most solemn promises to be in camp at the "turning off," I was permitted to be one of the party.

The quartermaster put a wagon at our disposal, and we piled into it, accommodating ourselves to the loose board seats as best we could. There must have been

a dozen of us; and a merrier, wilder, more reckless mob, one readier to laugh at broken bones and peril to necks, was not in all the army. Where are they now?

It is not my purpose to describe the ride. Every man reading who can remember the happy-go-lucky of his own lusty youth can imagine it. Providentially, the harness was sound and all the material under us good American stuff. The road, too, was in our favor, having been cut through the chaparral for the passage of gun-carriages during the siege; while narrow, it was level and unencumbered. Tired and winded, the six mules at last slowed down and rolled us safely into the city.

After dinner at the hotel, we betook ourselves in a body to the paymaster's, where our several accounts were squared in United States silver dollars newly minted. And then—well, I take the liberty of making a long hiatus of "the subsequent proceedings," except to say that near one o'clock in the night, as the one sober Indianian, I succeeded in getting the last man to bed, and left the party in care of the hostelry.

It is only just to say that I had not thought of violating my promise to the colonel to be in camp next morning, so, the teamster not to be found, I set out alone and on foot to do the six miles.

I remember a stone bridge in the city limits garnished midway with a statue of some holy personage. The image had been set up for the convenience of people piously inclined; but, as if in travesty, the district beyond the bridge was admittedly the most dangerous of the town. There, on that bridge and in front of the statue, I thought for the first time of the risks before me. Nevertheless, I went on. If the reflection left an impression on my nerves, I did not at the time notice it.



I passed the ugly precinct safely. Once some dogs in front of an adobe house assailed me, and I picked up a couple of stones, one for each hand. From the main road—to Marin, I think—I turned into the narrow passageway cut, as mentioned, by the pioneers. Occasionally it ran across openings in the chaparral. Occasionally a clump of brush projected into the passage, and there were loose stones; otherwise the way was clear, and I had not to stop and deliberate about the direction. Moreover, the stars were all out twinkling the brighter because of the absolute lethargy in the air. The hush was soothing, the coolness delicious.

Three miles had been put behind me certainly, and I was bowling swiftly and lightly along, when all at once it struck me that I had nothing with which to defend myself—not even a penknife. I stopped, my ears wide open. There was only the universal silence, and I moved on again, but not with a free step. I was aware, too, of cold shivers, now on my cheeks, now along my scalp; and I fancied noises, the breaking of twigs in the brush, whirrings overhead, beetles a-wing, birds restless and shifting on their roosts. The truth is, my nerve was going, and my will.

A clump had been left at a certain point in the wall of brush hemming the road large enough to have furnished hiding for a horse behind it. I noticed the clump when about twenty feet from it looking unusually black, and came to a dead stop. Then something like a lapse of sensation took me. My feet would not stir; they seemed to have taken root in the ground. I could neither think nor resolve. From the ends of my fingers and toes the blood in icy drops ran to my heart, so that it stood still, refusing to beat. In a word, I stood overwhelmed by all the phenomena to terror.

The very strange part of the affair was that I fell

into this state, so almost identical with nightmare, before anything in the least likely to cause it had really happened. Premonition suggests itself here; anyhow, the clutch upon me was hard—harder possibly of a recollection, at the moment too faint to be spoken of as an idea, that near where I was standing the servant of an officer had been waylaid only the week before, and murdered. And if, in this faint of will and nerve—such was the condition—anything in the least unusual were to happen, a general collapse was sure to overtake me.

And exactly that happened. I heard a sharp metallic *click, click*, as of the hammer of a gunlock raised first to half, then to full cock, slowly, and with care lest the game should startle and run. Then a hiss flew out—the familiar hiss of powder burning in a pan—and all the chaparral behind the clump flashed red; and quick as the flash my senses left me.

Upon “coming to,” I found myself hugging the ground like a snake. How long the lapse had lasted I cannot begin to tell, whether five minutes or an hour; neither have I an idea how I came to do what I did; none the less it was the best thing. Springing to the side of the road—the left, as I soon made out—I dropped down, and dragged myself into the chaparral, striking, by happy chance, one of the many paths tunnelled through the fastness by wandering goats and hogs.

It is doubtful if any man could have got closer to the ground than I had without digging into it. I lay still awhile listening. My heart beat, I fancied, like a bass drum, and a cold sweat covered me. Then, suddenly, I thought, “Good Heavens! what if some of the fellows in camp who knew I was to return are in the waylaying?” A thrill of shame splattered me as with hot water, and completed my recovery. I crawled on far-



..and all the clapsal behind the clump flashed red...

ther through the tunnel. The movement was slow and sore, for every leaf I came in contact with had its thorns keen as needles. At last I gained an opening, and stood up never more myself. There was a light in the sky signifying morning, and, taking direction from it, I walked around the place of ambush. Fortune favored me. Standing in the road, I listened again. There was nothing. Strangely enough, however, in that instant the panic caught me in full force again, and I started and ran. I ran with all my might, and so blind and headlong that if a regiment of Urvea's lancers had risen in front of me and blocked the narrow passage, I believe I should have dashed into them. The tents of the camp at length appeared, and I knew myself safe.

For a time I went about chary lest some one should blister me with the story, but no, the incident was never mentioned.

The sight of a child in fear always stops me now with quick appeal—or, with greater emphasis perhaps, since that night I have seen masses of soldiers in flight, and let them go by, partly out of sympathy, partly because no one knows better than I how blind and unreasoning panic is.

## VII

The battle of Buena Vista—February, 1847—Permission to go to the front—Saltillo—La Rinconada—Biscuits and onions—The Kentucky lieutenant—The adobe house—The three days' siege.

ABOUT the middle of the month (February) General Taylor astonished the command at Walnut Springs by disappearing, leaving nothing of headquarters except the white flag-staff. Presently we heard he had been seen going in the direction of Saltillo, with an escort of cavalry, and fast, as if the business were urgent. Had Santa Anna emerged from the desert?

A few days later, Captain S——n, of the Third Indiana, rode into camp en route to join his company wherever it might be. He was straining every nerve to reach it before the fight, and wanted somebody to go with him. Colonel Drake consented to my going. Here was another chance for me. Borrowing a mustang and riding-gear, I was on the road with the captain within thirty minutes. A double-barrelled shotgun of caliber to carry a service cartridge lay across my lap. The captain was custodian of a lunch contributed by Colonel Drake.

After leaving San Katrina we neither met nor were overtaken by a human being; this though the road was a broad highway connecting two capital cities. To such distance hostile armies approaching each other can interrupt the every-day courses of life!

Saltillo and Monterey lie separate sixty miles, with La Rinconada, a hacienda, half-way. Tired, hungry,

sore, we were glad when near nightfall a picket from the hacienda halted us. At the house in use as barracks we made ourselves known to a lieutenant, who proved himself a brave and hospitable gentleman. He was a Kentuckian. His reply to our request for entertainment was merely this:

"Certainly, gentlemen. You shall be made, man and beast, comfortable as possible. Sorry I can't do better by you. To-day we were to have received an instalment of rations. We draw from Saltillo. For some reason our teamster is not on time. Lancers probably on the road. Anyhow, we are reduced to hard-tack, with onions from a garden back of the house for dessert. Still, I can promise you salt of good quality, American made, with choice water from a ditch near by. If your stomachs work well, all right. Come in, and make yourselves at home."

A man set the table. The biscuits were of the cracker variety and the onions artistically sliced. The tin cups were not immaculately bright. There was no coffee. While we ate, the lieutenant generously opened his budget of news. La Rinconada, he said, had been occupied—I speak from memory—by Brigadier-General Marshall, his command consisting of a battalion of Kentucky horse, with two or three twenty-four-pounder guns and as many eight-inch howitzers. Only that morning the general had set out for Saltillo under fast-marching orders received during the night, leaving a half company in garrison. Extending his news beyond La Rinconada, our host further apprised us that Taylor and Wool, were doing business together. The army was out at Encantados waiting for Santa Anna advancing by forced marches. When last heard from the Mexican was at a village called Encornacion. There had been some skirmishing, and the armies would come





.. the lieutenant opened his budget of news.



together soon—exactly when or where no one could say. “The Old Man” (Taylor) had a mouth for secrets.

In the midst of the discourse—not more, in fact, than thirty minutes after our dismount—a soldier appeared and said, with suppressed excitement, “The pickets are firing, sir.”

“From what direction?”

“From the direction of Saltillo.”

The lieutenant buckled on his sword with gravity.

“Excuse me, gentlemen, if I leave you awhile,” he said. “I think there is business in this interruption. I have been expecting it, and see now why my teamster isn’t on time. If you want any more dessert, call for it.”

He was gone fifteen or twenty minutes. Meantime the sound of a dropping fire penetrated to where we sat. We quit munching crackers. Pretty soon we distinguished the tramp of men in files. The door flew open under the impulse of an energetic kick outside, and the garrison, or a part of it, marched in arms at trail. The light was dim—from a candle or two stuck in red onions—but there was enough to help to a glance at the soldiers who passed through the room steadily; after which the door admitting them was banged to and securely barred.

The lieutenant stopped to explain.

“It’s business, gentlemen. The house is being surrounded.”

“What kind of a house is it?” S——n asked.

“It’s adobe, sir, and pretty solid. There is a fence of the same material enclosing it on all sides, except here in front. If the Greasers have no artillery, we can stand them off.”

He looked over us, for we were then on our feet, and went on. “I suppose you prefer to take a hand with

us; so, if you are through supper"—he smiled grimly—"and will come with me, I'll see you have front seats."

S——n was accommodated with a musket and cartridges. I caught up my shot-gun; whereupon we followed the lieutenant.

"There's the back door," he said. "It's open to let the rest of the men in, if there's a rush. I'm taking you to the roof. Here's the ladder."

On the roof the night air seemed chilly—or the situation may have had an effect on me—and I could not help thinking it strange that my chronic longing to get into a fight should be gratified at such an out-of-the-way place. Sure enough the house was surrounded. Then S——n and I lay down behind the adobe wall rising above the roof like a parapet, and helped the garrison within and the leaguerers without to fill the night with intermittent musketry. Nobody of ours was hurt. At dawn the enemy retired out of range, and in that way as good as said we were not in their mind's eye—that they were holding the road merely to prevent communication until the crises up-country had passed.

We remained thus in leaguer until morning of the 25th, ample time to test thoroughly the theory of the vegetarians, and satisfy ourselves that crackers and onions, reinforced though they were with salt, American made, and choice water from a ditch, were susceptible of improvement as a ration. That day the Mexicans suddenly disappeared in the direction of Monterey, and S——n and I took to the road and its chances. In the afternoon we met the overdue teamster hurrying, under escort of four cavalrymen, to the relief of the lieutenant at La Rinconada.

## VIII

Saltillo—February 25th—General Wool—Major Cravens—The field of Buena Vista after the battle—The Indiana regiments—The disposition of troops—Description of the battle—Mexican forces and generals (names)—The first day's fight—Colonel Gell—Colonels Hadden and Davis—Marshall—The fight in the ravine—Violation of flag of truce—Bragg—"A little more grape, Bragg"—The day is saved.

WE, the captain and I, reached Saltillo in the evening of the 25th without further interruption. Thence we rode to Buena Vista, five miles out.

Tired as I was, I spent most of the night listening to accounts of the battle. When, finally, my blanket unrolled to receive my aching bones, I was stuffed with talk and gossip, and the mass lay in my mind indigestible, like a late supper on a provincial stomach.

First thing next day were calls on the Lanes, General "Joe" and Colonel "Jim." To the former I reported, explaining my presence.

Then followed my respects to General Wool, whom my father admired extravagantly. With volunteers General Wool's reputation was that of a martinet, prim, formal, and stern to an offensive degree. They said he would not allow himself the compliment of a serenade; that he was always in uniform, with a leather stock about his neck and epaulets on his shoulders; that he received visitors capped, booted, and spurred; that he began business at daybreak, and ate with his sword on; some believed he even slept with his sword. In short, there was no limit to the general's unpopularity. I

found him an agreeable gentleman, kind and sympathetic, and left him a subscriber to my father's opinion.

From General Wool, in company with friends who had been in the battle, notably Major Cravens, of the Second Indiana, I passed to the field. There the wrecks still lay in awful significance—dead men and horses, bayonets, accoutrements, broken muskets, hats, caps, cartridge-paper, fragments of clothing. The earth and rocks were in places black with blood, here a splotch, there a little rill. Details were still digging pits for the sepulture of Americans; other parties were hauling the unfortunates in and depositing them in ghastly rows by the pits. The civil authorities of Saltillo had been ordered to bury the Mexican dead; they were having the bodies dragged to the nearest ravines, pitched pitilessly down into the depths, and half covered with stones. Groups of swarthy peons, women and men, went about clipping the manes and tails of the dead horses.<sup>1</sup>

Though too late to make the battle of Buena Vista a part of my life, there is a reason, and I think it a good one, why I should deal with it somewhat in detail.

In his official report, General Taylor condemned a portion of the troops from Indiana, and in a manner so sweeping that the reputation of the state suffered from it through a long series of years—down, in fact, to the War of the Rebellion. And believing myself in possession of evidence to show the judgment unjust, and in material points officially false, it would seem a duty required of me to correct the wrong. That I will do in the next chapter. First the main features of the field should be considered.

It was crossed by a road its whole length from north

<sup>1</sup> To make lariats and saddle-girths.



There the wrecks still lay ....

to south. Blocking that road brought Santa Anna to a stand-still and compelled him to give battle.

In selecting the field, General Wool had been governed by its defensive advantages, exactly as General Taylor was governed when he approved the selection.

Going south from Saltillo, say to San Luis, one comes, after passing the height above the city, to a sheep-ranch called San Juan de la Buena Vista, from which the name of the battle was taken. Aside from a few clay-roofed habitations more nearly *jocales* than houses, the hacienda is unmarked save by a corral probably one hundred and fifty feet square. Indeed, everything about the place is in keeping with the plateau extending thence far to the south, a valley of desolation bounded by mountains on the east and west. Cacti and Spanish-bayonets are the only green things to vary the dun-gray color of the spacious stretch.

Beyond the hacienda there is a spread of the plateau, crossing which the traveller comes next to the Pass of Angostura.

The road there descends into a squeeze between ridged heights on the left and gullies on the right, the latter shapeless and of such width and depths as to be passable by nothing living but birds. A spur of the mountain dropping down to the gullies secured the position against attempts at turning. A simple earthwork for the accommodation of a battery across the road up where the descent into the squeeze begins would hold the pass against direct attacks along the road. General Wool, quick to see these advantages and accept them as kindnesses of nature, caused a breastwork to be thrown up at the point mentioned, and intrusted it to Captain J. M. Washington, of the Fourth United States Artillery. Two companies of the First Illinois Infantry behind the breastwork, and six other companies constituting the



body of the regiment under Colonel Hardin on the hill above it, supported Washington and his five guns. And still not content, knowing the pass to be the key to the whole field of battle, he posted Colonel Lane's Third Indiana in reserve on a summit a little to Washington's rear.

Thus La Angostura and the road through it, together with a safe position on which to rest the right of the little army, were happily secured, leaving Santa Anna but one other point of attack.

Ravines, eight or ten in number, break the plateau east of the pass into ridges. Trending a little south of east, they all bear down towards the pass and become gorges sixty or seventy feet in depth, immense natural ditches absolutely deterrent except by going around them up by the foot-hills where there was a passageway, rough yet practicable for infantry and horsemen, which once gained necessarily operated the turning of the pass. Knowing that to succeed Santa Anna must secure that way, no other being left him, General Wool applied himself to fencing it in.

A table of the commands other than those we have seen posted in support of Washington available for the upper defence may now be submitted. And we are startled here, they are so few:

## REGULARS

Third Artillery, Sherman and Bragg.

First Dragoons, Captain Steene.

Second Dragoons, Lieutenant-Colonel May.

## VOLUNTEERS

### CAVALRY

Arkansas, Colonel Gell.

Kentucky, Colonel Marshall.

Texas Volunteers, Major McCullough.



## INFANTRY

First Illinois, Colonel Hardin.  
Second Illinois, Colonel Bissell.  
Second Kentucky, Colonel McKee.  
First Mississippi, Colonel Davis.  
Second Indiana, Colonel Bowles.

Meagre to the eye, meagre in fact. But worse, the commands were all fractional. Thus, the First Illinois was less four companies garrisoning Saltillo. Two companies of the First Mississippi were guarding headquarters and the train in park near the hacienda. So, as will be presently seen, the Second and Third Indiana each lost two companies by detachment. All this aside from the reductions wrought by disease, on which account few, if any, of the regiments could boast four hundred effectives all told.

To post this inadequate force to the best advantage over a ground so spacious and peculiar was indeed a most difficult problem.

Let us see how it was done.

Three ravines in the south all lead from the road through the pass up to the now all-important passageway along the base of the mountains. These were, in fact, what in military phrase may be termed covered ways, every one of them possible of use for the ascent of infantry to the plateau, all of which had to be defended.

The extreme southern situation had a salience certain to attract Santa Anna, and General Wool thought best to establish his left at the head of that ravine; so he began the posting by placing Colonel Bowles's Second Indiana there, in support of Lieutenant O'Brien with three guns. General Lane had charge of the regiment and battery, and all the dispositions else had relation to that most advanced position.

At the left of the Second Indiana, but some distance to its rear, and directly across the passageway, Colonel Humphrey Marshall's Kentucky cavalry and a squadron of the Second United States Dragoons were placed.

Then in *echelon*—the word is somewhat strained—at the right rear of the Second Indiana, but nearly a quarter of a mile removed, Bissell's Second Illinois and a section of Bragg's battery were established fronting south to lend Bowles a helping hand, if need should be, and at the same time look after the heads of the second and third ravines.

Left of Bissell, at a wide interval, there were two guns and a squadron of dragoons.

Next, at another interval, Colonel McKee's Second Kentucky infantry was posted.

Then behind a ravine in rear of all these—the mother ravine, so to speak, having its head far up in the mountains, and christened La Bosca de la Bestarros—Colonel Gell's Arkansas cavalry was in reserve.

Finally, to keep the position of the Second Indiana from being turned by infantry scaling the mountain at its left, a provisional battalion was formed of two companies from the Second and Third Indiana respectively, and extended along a convenient ridge overlooking the plateau.<sup>1</sup>

Then dispositions made—they are given as of mid-afternoon, February 22d—General Wool rested. He had done the best with his scant force; and, following his example, it is for us now to look at the enemy.

<sup>1</sup> Davis's First Mississippi is omitted from mention, it having been called off, together with a squadron of dragoons under Lieutenant-Colonel May, as escort for General Taylor returning to Saltillo.

Heavy clouds of dust seen in the morning of the 22d in the direction of Angostura notified General Taylor of the approach of the Mexicans.

At eleven o'clock a summons to surrender at discretion was politely rejected.

The summons had ample backing. Twenty-eight battalions of infantry; thirty-nine squadrons of cavalry; artillery: three twenty-four pounders, three sixteen-pounders, five twelve-pounders, five eight-pounders, one seven-inch howitzer, with four hundred and thirteen artillerists to serve them. That is to say, eighteen thousand one hundred and thirty-three men were closing in behind the last ridge out on the waterless land in front of Buena Vista.<sup>1</sup>

These were commanded by the ablest generals of the Mexican Republic, eager, each of them, to share with his chief magistrate the harvest of glory which they doubted not was ready for his reaping: José Miñon, Michel Torená, Pedro Ampudia, Manuel Andrade, Ignacio de Mora y Villamil, Manuel Lombardini, Francisco Pacheco, Julien Juvera, José María Ortega, Ángel Guzmán, Antonio Corona, Francisco Pérez.<sup>2</sup>

Santa Anna began the battle directly after the rejection of the demand for surrender by feigning an attack along the road through the Pass of Angostura. Then, amid a flourish of batteries in position here and there, Ampudia's light brigade commenced swarming up a ridge facing the American riflemen at General Lane's left. All eyes on the plateau below turned to follow the crackling which ensued. Ere long night hid the combatants. Said Major Cravens, standing with me

<sup>1</sup> This statement of numbers from Santa Anna's official report. Commands not mentioned by him, however, brought his army to over twenty thousand men actually engaged.

<sup>2</sup> The reader is requested to give each of these names the honorable prefix *General Don*.

where his regiment lay trying to sleep: "I sat on my blanket for hours watching the affair on the ridge yonder. I couldn't hear the rifles, but the sparkles reminded me of June in Indiana and of fire-flies gleaming across a meadow."

That Santa Anna designed turning the American left by gaining the passageway at the base of the mountains was now obvious.

To that end, under cover of night, he shifted Ballarta to the right where, by a laborious pull up an eminence, the shrewd artilleryman planted his five eight-pounders in range to enfilade Bowles and O'Brien. Juvera, chief of cavalry, together with Torrejon and Andrade, was next posted in support of Ballarta. Then, to gain the advantage of a surprise, the infantry divisions of Lombardini and Pacheco, seven thousand strong, were drawn noiselessly into a broad ravine where they bivouacked.

On the morning of the 23d a furious outbreak of Mexican artillery announced dawn over the mountains and seemed a chosen signal of action. Ampudia at the sound rushed the riflemen in his front; but reinforced they held their own. Juvera gained ground, while Villanil and Blanco down in the pass lost heavily repeating the feint of the day before.

The desolate valley was yet ringing with the unwonted thunder, when suddenly Lombardini's division burst out of the broad ravine; gaining space on the plateau, it faced by the left flank, and in column of brigades confronted O'Brien and the Second Indiana.<sup>1</sup>

While the issue of fire waxed hot, another stream of pomponed-shakos poured out of the same ravine, and

<sup>1</sup> The execution of this manœuvre was so beautiful that it was a subject of general commendation while I was in General Taylor's camp.

Pacheco, repeating Lombardini's simple manœuvre, took post on his colleague's right and joined in the battle.

With all their weight, the Mexicans wavered. Then to get closer, and partly to avoid the enfilading of Balcorta, General Lane ordered an advance. O'Brien obeyed; but in the midst of the movement Colonel Bowles ordered, "Cease firing, and retreat." Twice he gave the order; whereupon his regiment began breaking at its right, company after company, until, presently, the greater part dissolved into a mob flying aimlessly to the rear. O'Brien, left without support, withdrew two of his guns, the horses and men of the Third having been killed or disabled.

Results followed rapidly.

Juvera advanced trotting.

The American riflemen in the mountain, about to be cut off, made haste down, and ran, most of them, to the hacienda, stopping in the corral. Of those who tried to rejoin their standards, many were slain.

The Kentuckians at the left of the Second Indiana—Marshall having reached them safely—faced to the rear, and plying their spurs joined Colonel Gell on the thitherside of La Bosca.

Most serious, however, between Lombardini and Washington in the pass there now stood but three regiments all seriously reduced—Bissell's Second Illinois, McKee's Second Kentucky, and Hardin's First Illinois. The gallant Mexican half-wheeled his battle front to the left, and it seemed that the three regiments, beaten in detail, must go the way of the Second Indiana; but General Wool kept a clear head. At his orders, Bissell fell back, while Hardin and McKee advanced running to him; and meeting, the three formed a line into which Bragg and Sherman thrust their batteries. Then Lombardini and Pacheco were upon them with a roar of

“vivas”; the ravines as they approached reducing the opposing fronts to an equality, it became a question with the combatants which could longest endure the killing.

Juvera allowed Marshall and Gell no pause. Crossing La Bosca, he fell upon them, and pushed them back—back almost to the corral of the hacienda. Gell, refusing to yield an inch, died sword in hand.

Then in the nick of time—eight o’clock—General Taylor appeared returning from Saltillo with the First Mississippi and May’s dragoons. By every rule of scientific war he was beaten;<sup>1</sup> rising in his stirrups and looking back he could see Miñon’s pennons fluttering between the hacienda and the city; his left was turned; his cavalry was beating back overwhelmed; one thin line—thinner for the smoke enveloping it—was hardly staying Lombardini’s masses seeking clutch of the Pass of Angostura. If then he had a sinking of the heart, no one of those about him saw it in his stolid countenance. Lane, of the Third Indiana, had been in reserve chafing; him he ordered to join Davis; the two to cross La Bosca and crush Pacheco’s flank. One gun—Kilburn’s—would go with them.

Lane started on the run. Davis halted once to repel an attack of lancers. Then about two hundred of the Second Indiana under their own colors, and led by their Lieutenant-Colonel (Hadden), met Davis, and, without halting, formed on his left. It was a long run, but finally the three regiments together reached La Bosca, and crossing it, and deploying with cheers, poured a plunging fire into Pacheco’s column at a time when his at-

<sup>1</sup> The story that General Wool rode to General Taylor upon the latter’s appearance on the field, and said to him, “We are beaten,” is apocryphal. At that moment the two were separate from each other by a ravine too deep for passage by horsemen.





rising in his stirrups and looking back..



tention was wholly absorbed by Hardin, McKee, and Bissell. In a time incredibly short the portion of the plateau down which Lombardini and Pacheco had descended so triumphantly was clear of the living. Lombardini himself rode off wounded.

General Taylor had leisure now to give attention to the fight which had been going on strenuously between Marshall and Juvera, begun, as has been seen, directly that Colonel Bowles ordered his regiment to retreat.

Following and crowding Marshall, Juvera was drawn down close to the hacienda. Suddenly the coping-stones on three sides of the corral seemed to burst into flame. The cheer that followed was as stunning as the volley. Strangely, then, the Mexicans divided; one part of them sped past the corral, and, crossing the valley, disappeared in a defile of the mountain in the west; the others turned, and in great disorder rode just as madly back over the bloody track by which they had come, intending to rejoin the main body of their army. Bragg was sent to intercept them, with Davis, Lane, and Hadden in support. The broken, panic-stricken horsemen tried to find refuge in the foot-hills, where they would have been forced to surrender had not Santa Anna despatched a messenger to General Taylor asking what he wanted. It is not often the sanctity of a flag of truce is so infamously abused. While it was coming and going the enemy escaped.

At two o'clock the plateau was in possession of the Americans, all save a corner in the southeast where the enemy was in apparent confusion but busy about something. Occasionally the sullen report of a heavy gun and the scream of a shell in flight over the ridges broke an hour of inaction. The weary soldiers availed themselves of the calm to rest, lying in semi-order about their colors.

But Santa Anna was not beaten. The hour so welcome to his enemies, because of its quiet, was on his part an hour of intrepid action.

Assembling the remains of the divisions of Lombardini and Pacheco, he united them with Ampudia's light brigade and Ortega's third division which was intact, having been in reserve. He also moved to the right a column of Villamil's that had been making feints against Washington, and mobilized a battery of twenty-four-pounders. Ballarta he brought down to the plain. Corona had already posted the four twelve-pounders in what he judged the best place.

By this thrifty management the president-general was able to make his final attack with twelve thousand men, General Don Francisco Perez in command. The strategy was Napoleonic.

Colonels Hardin and McKee, it appears, had undertaken a reconnoissance to expose the enemy in his corner of the plateau. Supporting O'Brien and his two pieces, they reached the ground which the Second Indiana had held in the morning; just then, Santa Anna's preparation completed, Perez advanced. In the words of General Taylor, both regiments were "entirely routed"; and this time O'Brien lost all his guns. Hardin and McKee and his lieutenant-colonel, young Henry Clay, refusing to retreat or to order retreat, died with their faces to the foe.<sup>1</sup>

The two regiments, carrying their heroic dead tenderly, retreated down a ravine opening into the pass under Washington's breastwork. There were pursuers who shot at them from the sides of the ravine; though a greater multitude entered the ravine after them, and in

<sup>1</sup> One cannot avoid contrasting the conduct of Hardin and McKee and Clay with the behavior of Colonel Bowles; yet it was to the latter the commanding general applied the term *gallant*.



...carrying their heroic dead tenderly...

their eagerness kept on until in the area spreading and rockbound at the exit. There, looking up, they beheld the mouths of Washington's five guns staring upon them with unwinking blackness. They turned to get back, but the crowd behind pushed them forward. Washington withheld his fire; when the last fugitive was safe, he opened upon the shrieking mass packed in the area, his guns all double-shotted with grape and canister.<sup>1</sup>

Perez, depending upon weight of attack and impetus, delivered it in column.

Still General Taylor was undismayed. He ordered Bragg and his supports—Davis and Lane—to fall upon the enemy's left flank, for which they had to recross La Bosca; and they did it on the run, Hadden with them. Then they were attacked; whereupon, Davis directing, they formed a "V," the angle resting on the edge of the ravine, and by the cross-fire they were thus enabled to give ground swept the assailants from their front; then they hurried after Bragg.

Bragg, meantime, pushed on with all the speed the ground permitted, and without waiting for support. When he wheeled his guns into battery, the enemy was within a few yards of their muzzles, and at first he gave

<sup>1</sup> That area, I do not hesitate saying, all my subsequent experience in mind, was the most horrible after-battle scene I ever saw. The dead lay in the pent space body on body, a blending and interlacement of parts of men as defiant of the imagination as of the pen.

In 1867 I spent a day on the field of Buena Vista renewing my recollections of 1847. I remember seeing a man coming slowly towards me. In the distance his actions were so strange that I waited for him. Hoe in hand, he was leading a rill of water somewhere, and it ran gently after him. Finally, and to my surprise, he led it down to the area described in the text, then a patch of wheat in luxurious growth. Could it have been, I asked myself, that the crop he was fostering derived its emerald richness from the blood spilled there the terrible day so long gone?

ground as the pieces recoiled. Then it was that General Taylor sent the famous order, "A little more grape, Captain Bragg." And speaking of results, General Taylor adds in his report, "The first discharge of canister caused the enemy to hesitate; the second and third drove him back in disorder, *and the day was saved.*"<sup>1</sup>

Six o'clock and the repulse was complete. Night fell cold, and in the morning Santa Anna and all his host, save the wounded and those never to rise again, were back at Agua Nueva.

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine; the expression is General Taylor's.

## IX

General Taylor's report of the battle of Buena Vista—Report of court of inquiry exonerating Indiana regiments charged with cowardice—Colonel Bowles—A physician and botanist—Brigadier-General Lane—The battle.

IN General Taylor's official report of the battle of Buena Vista there is this sentence:

"The Second Indiana, which had fallen back as stated, could not be rallied, and took no further part in the action, except a handful of men who, under its gallant Colonel Bowles, joined the Mississippi regiment and did good service."

I say now that in all American history there is not another sentence which, taken as a judgment of men in mass, equals that one for cruelty and injustice—none so wanton in misstatement, none of malice so obstinately adhered to by its author, none so comprehensive in its damage, since it dishonored a whole state, and, though half a century has passed, still holds the state subject to stigma.

Let me now make my words good. It is necessary in the very beginning to get the charges covered by the extract quoted distinctly in mind.

General Taylor says the regiment fell back. That is true; but as the statement is wholly unqualified, the inference is left that the falling back was from cowardice, and to that I except.

General Taylor says, next, that the regiment could not be rallied. That I say is untrue.



General Taylor says, in the third place, that the regiment after it fell back took no further part in the action. To this he makes an exception in favor of a "handful of men who, under its gallant Colonel Bowles, joined the Mississippi regiment and did good service." That, I say, is one of those cunning partial truths which, by forcing a contrast between the meritorious conduct of a few and the supposed infamous conduct of the many, but intensifies a wrong.

The question now presents itself, How am I to make my exceptions good against General Taylor? By putting my dictum against his? The American people are discriminative, and to none are they so generous as to the dead; wherefore no one appreciates more keenly the need upon me, which is that the testimony offered must be of sanctity superior to his word. And that it shall be.

Colonel Jefferson Davis, learning, after the battle, that Colonel Bowles, of the Second Indiana, had fallen into the ranks of his Mississippi regiment as a private, and behaved well, conceived the idea of specially recognizing the conduct. So he ceremoniously presented to Colonel Bowles the Mississippi rifle used by him. The publicity of the affair affronted the survivors of the Second Indiana, who held that acceptance of the present was an admission to their dishonor. Then General Lane, thinking to get the facts of the retreat of record, sought a court of inquiry, the regiment having been part of his command in the battle.

I now submit extracts from the records of that court, premising that they are in Washington.

"(Orders No. 279.)

"HEADQUARTERS CAMP AT BUENA VISTA, *April 26, 1847.*

"1. By a court of inquiry which convened at this camp in pursuance of Order No. 233, current series, and of which



Brigadier-General Marshall is president, . . . the following have been announced as the facts of the case. . . .

"Facts— . . . That through the exertions of General Lane and other officers, from one hundred and fifty to two hundred men of the Second Regiment of Indiana Volunteers were rallied, and attached to the Mississippi regiment and the Third Indiana, and remained with them on the field of battle during the remainder of the day.

By command of Brigadier-General Wool.

"IRVIN McDOWELL, A. A.-General."

General Taylor said the regiment could not be rallied, and after the retreat it took no further part in the action. Attention is directed to the squareness of denial with which the court meets the two assertions.

General Lane then determined to put the blame for the retreat where it belonged; and with that in view he preferred charges against Colonel Bowles. These General Taylor ignored by declining to order a court. In a short time, however, public opinion—the term is as justly applicable to a camp as to a city—drove Colonel Bowles in turn to ask a court of inquiry upon his conduct; and General Wool, who had succeeded to the command at Buena Vista, ordered a court with Colonel Bissell, of the Second Illinois Volunteers, for president, and from its report I submit extracts, not doubting that their pertinency will be instantly admitted.

"(Orders No. 281.)

"HEADQUARTERS CAMP AT BUENA VISTA, *April 27, 1847.*

"1. A court of inquiry, of which Colonel Bissell, Second Illinois Volunteers, is president, convened at this camp on the 12th instant, pursuant to Orders No. 267, current series, being instituted at the request of Colonel W. A. Bowles. . . .

“The court, after diligently and faithfully inquiring into the matter before it, report, from the evidence given, the following as the facts of the case, and its opinion thereon:

“Statement of facts:—In reference to the first charge, it appears from the evidence that Colonel Bowles is ignorant of the company, battalion, and brigade drills. . . .

“In relation to the second charge, it appears from the evidence . . . that Colonel Bowles gave the order, ‘Cease firing, and retreat’; that General Lane was present, and that he had no authority from General Lane to give such an order.

“The court finds that the fact of Colonel Bowles having given the order above mentioned did induce the regiment to retreat in disorder, and that Colonel Bowles gave the order with the intention of making the regiment leave its position.

“The court is of the opinion that at the time Colonel Bowles gave the order, ‘retreat,’ he was under the impression that the artillery had retreated, when, in fact, the battery at that time had gone to an advanced position under the order of General Lane, which order had not been communicated to Colonel Bowles.

“And in conclusion, the court finds that throughout the engagement, and throughout the whole day, Colonel Bowles evinced no want of personal courage or bravery, but that he did manifest a want of capacity and judgment as a commander.

“By command of Brigadier-General Wool.

“IRVIN McDOWELL, A. A.-General.”

The reader now has the evidence upon which I rely—viz., the findings and opinions of two military courts; not one, but two courts. To reach the full effect of the clash in simple truth, I will resort to the deadly parallel, the statement of General Taylor, on the one hand, and the findings of the courts, on the other.

## GENERAL TAYLOR

General Taylor imputes the falling back to cowardice.

General Taylor says the regiment could not be rallied.

General Taylor says that with exception of a handful of men who, under its gallant Colonel Bowles, joined the Mississippi regiment, the regiment took no further part in the action.

General Taylor says that the exceptional handful of men under Colonel Bowles joined the Mississippi regiment.

## THE COURTS

Colonel Bissell's court found that the regiment was ordered by its colonel to retreat; that the order, "Cease firing, and retreat," was given by its colonel to induce the regiment to retreat, and that the colonel did induce it to leave its position.

General Marshall's court found that from one hundred and fifty to two hundred men of the regiment were rallied by General Lane and other officers.

General Marshall's court found that the one hundred and fifty or two hundred men who were rallied remained on the field of battle during the rest of the day.

General Marshall's court found that the one hundred and fifty or two hundred men who were rallied attached themselves to the Mississippi regiment *and the Third Indiana regiment*.

These differences are material; and, being cast into high relief, which is to be believed, the general or the

courts? Admitting out of regard for certain susceptibilities that, man to man, the volunteer is not as effective in war as the regular, may not something in this instance be allowed to preponderance, since all military courts are composed of officers acting under the solemnity of an oath?

But here some one may suggest that General Taylor never saw the findings of either of the courts. It is true his report of the battle was forwarded before the trials were had; nevertheless, the facts remain as found, and are not to be lost sight of; indeed, that they were of subsequent discovery but intensifies the obstinacy of the man. The records of the courts engrossed and signed required his indorsement; so he *must* have seen them. If that were not so, however, there is evidence in plenty showing he was besought over and over, importuned, begged, for the credit of the brave men involved, the dead as well as the living, for the honor of a state and for the truth of history, to modify his report and make it conform to the findings of the courts. But without avail. Why? The reason must remain forever in theory. All I know is that commanders are charged with keeping the honor of their men, the honor of the humblest as well as that of those higher in rank, and that they always hail opportunities to change premature reports harsh in terms or mistaken in fact. To the rule Zachary Taylor is the only exception within my reading or personal experience.

Taking the finding of the court to be the truth, the small number found to have been rallied after the retreat—one hundred and fifty or two hundred men—may cause a smile, for *prima facie* it is a weakness in the argument. *That* I will now notice, and in the connection consider the propriety of the special compliment to Colonel Bowles by General Taylor—a compliment the more remarkable

in view of the opinion of the Bissell court touching the colonel's general ignorance and incapacity as a commander.

If in what I have now to say any statement should have the tone and color of an eye-witness, it is because, having reached the field so shortly after the battle—only two days—I think my opportunities for information fit me to speak of the things then in controversy there.

Colonel Bowles was a physician of scientific attainments, brave, ambitious, pleasant-mannered, easy-going; but withal it was presently demonstrated that he could not master the elementaries of the tactics in vogue at the time of his enlistment. To make the situation worse for him an extreme attachment had arisen between the regiment and its late colonel, Lane. That officer continued to tent with it after his promotion, and carried it with him as often as he changed location. The relation was precisely that which sprang up between General Taylor and the First Mississippi. Practically, General Lane remained colonel to the suppression of Colonel Bowles. He looked after the discipline and personal welfare of the men. He drilled them, and they were beautifully drilled. To this Colonel Bowles made no objection. His tastes ran in other lines. I myself have seen him while the regiment was on the parade-ground under General Lane ride into camp bringing botanical specimens of the flora of the adjacent country. He seemed incapable of jealousy. Certainly he had no sense of the awful responsibility of command in battle. The men treated him good-naturedly. None of them dreamed that under his order the ultimate martial issue to which they looked forward so ardently would turn out a life-long provocation of tears and shame.

The statement to which I now come will be a surprise to those who have of late been used to hearing of regi-

ments twelve hundred strong. At roll-call in the morning of February 23d, the total of muskets in the stacks of the Second Indiana did not exceed three hundred and sixty. Two companies (Walker's and Osborne's) had been drawn off the day before to help form a provisional battalion of rifles under Major Gorman, of the Third Indiana, leaving with the colors eight companies averaging forty-five men in the ranks.

Nor may it be overlooked that the Third Indiana having been placed in reserve by General Wool, all of actual command possessed by Brigadier-General Lane was the Second Indiana and O'Brien's battery of three guns. We have then the anomaly, brought about by the relation Lane bore to the Second Indiana, of a regiment going into battle with practically two colonels. One cannot help asking, what if in the turmoil and noise the orders of the two *colonels* should happen to conflict? Or, to illustrate, what if one of them should order "Forward," and the other, moved by a different inspiration, should order "Retreat?"

The air had been uncomfortably cold through the night of the 23d, so, what time they were not trying to sleep, the men walked behind their arms in stack, and sang and joked and amused themselves watching the flitting flashes of the combatant rifles on the overlooking heights.

By three o'clock everybody was on the alert. Then, dawn being yet in half-transparency, the deadly business of the day was begun by the Mexicans, of whom a swarm sprang out and spread darkly up and over the low foot-hills next the plateau, going to the assistance of their balking skirmishers. Then on an elevation, advanced well towards the Second Indiana, masses of men appeared dragging guns into position, five in all. General Lane, on his horse and watchful, knew that it



would never do for the fire of that battery (Ballarta's) to catch his companies unformed, and he ordered the regiment, "Fall in"—he, be it observed, not Colonel Bowles. Just then the quick report of artillery rolled over the plateau far and near. A few minutes later Colonel Churchill, of General Wool's staff, rode to tell Lane that the enemy was showing down in the road in feint, while the real attack was coming against him up the first ravine in his front. Without a word to Colonel Bowles, who was in rear of the extreme right company, Lane galloped round the left flank of the regiment to a position in front of the colors. He made there as if to deliver a speech; but, observing the alignment merely, he ordered, "Forward—guide centre—march," after which the double colonelcy was an established fact. Well, now, if the real colonel does not awake from his suppression and do some contrary thing which strikes him as the best! Promptly, as if on parade, the regiment stepped out, and O'Brien advanced his three guns.

Then out of the ravine, number one, towards which Lane was heading, a military band richly uniformed appeared and began playing the national air of Mexico. The regiment, observing it, cheered, and took step from the inspiring music. Only for a moment, however, for the band, which did not halt, was succeeded by an array seemingly interminable of infantry in double columns, flag after flag. Suddenly, space being cleared for the manœuvre, the enemy faced by the left flank, and became a line of battle masking another line. Up, too, from the same ravine in rapid succession other shakoed bodies poured and repeated the manœuvre of the first until two full divisions (Lombardini's and Pacheco's) moved forward, a splendid but terrible spectacle.

General Lane's object in advancing had been partly



to reach a point from which to control the ravine before the enemy gained the plateau. Seeing that it was too late, he halted the regiment and sent his aide to order O'Brien into battery; then, clearing the line of fire, he galloped to the rear by the left flank. Had he gone by the right flank, he could have spoken to the other colonel there and told him his wishes; as it was, he did all the commanding directly; at his word the men went to their knees; at his word they began firing.

Then O'Brien opening, Ballarta quickened all his guns, so that now, indeed, the battle for the plateau was joined.

Of the generalship I have nothing to say. My purpose is to help to an intelligent judgment of the conduct of the regiment in question.

There are but three hundred and sixty men in the ranks. Enfilading them from left to right, and within easy range, is a battery of five eight-pounder guns. Advancing upon them in brigade front, thus overlapping their own front, are infantry columns of two divisions variously estimated, the most recent authority putting their strength at seven thousand—eighteen to one!

The regiment is nearly a quarter of a mile in advance of the regiment (Bissell's Second Illinois) next it in the *echelon* of formation—literally on the plateau alone, and unsupported, except we reverse the order of things and call O'Brien's three guns a support.

Lastly, this is the regiment's first battle, and I see no need of stopping to tell what all that means. Set upon by everything that makes battle terrible—overwhelming numbers in front, bullets *swishing* about them, shells bursting, comrades falling—if General Taylor was right, and that a band of cowards, it will certainly break now.

Did they break?

In the box of every man of them there are forty cartridges, each with a bullet and three buckshot, and loading by rammer was a slow process; yet the Mexicans are brought to a halt, and their shooting grows wilder. The distance is about a hundred yards. Some of ours, to be sure, are white of face. A breeze blows fitfully lifting the smoke, so that now and then the very cool among them take deliberate aim, and that means death, for at home they are woodsmen and hunters. The first chill goes quickly—then they are all steady.

Dante, in his *Inferno*, speaks of all horrible sounds, but nowhere of music; so in battle the noises are mostly explosive discordances; still one can become so intent upon his individual performance, whether with sword, musket, or great gun, that action becomes automatic. That was what now happened. The men loaded and fired, and heard nothing, neither whistle of bullet nor shriek of shell or stricken comrade. How full the air was of missiles may be judged. In the first position of the regiment twenty-one of the forty cartridges were fired. Of the three hundred and sixty combatants in the ranks ninety dropped dead or disabled by wounds. The color-sergeant fell. Seeing the flag go down, Paymaster Dix, a volunteer aide with General Lane, being near, ran and picked it up, and kept it flying until Lieutenant Kunkel demanded it of him. Kunkel, brave fellow, bore it the rest of the day, a mark for the enemy, a brave sight for countrymen, if only they chose to see it. My poor friend and school-mate, Captain Kinder, was hit though not mortally wounded. The lancers overtook and killed him in an ambulance. General Lane, in the act of cheering, was shot in the right arm; a hot canister cauterized his cheek; his horse's lower jaw was broken. And now, on account of Bal-



Seeing the flag go down, Paymaster Dix, being near, ran and picked it up.

larta's gunners, it was needful to shift the regiment. Forward or back? Just then General Lane saw the Mexicans in his front faltering, and he resolved to get closer to them. O'Brien must advance. Robinson, Lane's adjutant-general, delivered the order, and it was instantly obeyed. From his place behind McRae's company, the last one on the left, Lane called out, "Forward"—when horror of horrors! The right was going to pieces, and streaming to the rear fast as man could run.

The point of sovereign interest in this most dismal episode at Buena Vista is reached. In certain books, favorites of mine, the catastrophes cause me the keenest anguish. Such is the effect of the fall of Harold in Bulwer's novel of that name. Such, also, is the death of Uncas in Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*. So always, thinking of the break and flight of the Second Indiana in the midst of its well-doing, I have return of the same pang sharper of a conviction that had the brave fellows been held to the work three or five minutes longer, single-handed they would have routed the divisions before them. And then what glory would have been theirs! And how the state would have shone in the reflected light!

Thanks now to the courts, there is no mystery about the cause of the break. We know it was by order. We know, too, by whose order. Wherefore the question—as the court says Colonel Bowles was not a coward, as General Taylor pronounces him *gallant*, how could he upon his own volition have done a thing so shameful?

The circumstance is one about which everybody can have a theory. I will give mine. The moment General Lane, at the left of the regiment, conceived the idea of shifting it nearer the enemy, Colonel Bowles, over on the right, dismounted, and, too far off for instant com-

munication with his chief, was in a confusion of senses begotten, doubtless, of a consciousness of incapacity, not to speak of the sounds that assailed him, discordant, furious, cyclonic. Old soldiers who have been in the heat of battles know how those sounds do actually buffet one as with blows, and how they are attended with stupefying sensations. Anyhow, holding his horse, if not behind it, he chanced to look through a rift in the smoke, and, not seeing O'Brien or his battery, was seized with an inspiration the opposite of General Lane's. He heard no voice of glory calling. If he saw an advantage, it was in getting the men and himself out of the tremendous broil; and not knowing how to do that by manœuvre, though there are a number of methods prescribed in the books; without thinking to send the flag back to indicate a place of rally; too much dazed, indeed, to remember that he himself was subject to order; too confused to consider anything but escape in the quickest possible time, he called out, "Cease firing, and—retreat," and in those words, doubtless, exhausting his slender store of tactical knowledge. Only the company nearest heard what he said, and they turned and gazed at him in wonder. A second time he raised his voice—"Cease firing, and—retreat."

Now no man shall say this was not an order. It was an order, and by one in authority. And at once all the shame of the flight that followed attaches to him who gave the order—the *gallant Colonel Bowles*.

In the next place there was a rally; and while in camp I myself heard the details of it, and am not permitted to doubt what I heard—else there is not honor among men.

General Lane, looking ahead, saw La Bosca, in the ravine, laying a broad trench across the line of flight, and rode to it full speed, taking Lieutenant-Colonel

Hadden and Major Cravens with him. Wheeling his horse on the thither side, he confronted the men. Fifteen of them in panic ran by him to the sheep-ranch nearly a mile away. There, with others from different commands, mostly riflemen dislodged, as we shall presently see, they did good service later in the forenoon. Quite one hundred and ninety of the regiment heard him and hastened to reform; and when presently Lieutenant Kunkel overtook the body with the colors, an accounting for the absent was easy. This was the table generally agreed upon in the leisure following the fight:

Killed and wounded . . . . .	90
Absent in care of the wounded . . . . .	40
Rallied by Colonel Bowles . . . . .	25
Rallied at the sheep-ranch . . . . .	15
Rallied by General Lee and other officers . . .	190
	<hr/>
	360

Is it reasonable, now, asking more proof of me? Out of a total of three hundred and sixty men, two hundred and fifteen back under their own colors, ought, I insist, to be fact enough of itself, the question being whether there was a rally. Then, as to courage, ninety killed and wounded before the order to retreat—ninety out of three hundred and sixty—one-fourth of the entire firing-line! How often has battle anywhere such a record of proportional loss?

We come next to the compliment to Colonel Bowles paid, as has been seen, by General Taylor. The colonel ordered the retreat; he rallied what his eulogist calls a handful of the men; then, rifle in hand, he spent the rest of the day a private soldier, loading and firing in the front or rear rank of a strange regiment. What is gallantry in a private may be unqualified shame in an



officer. This bit of military philosophy was never so pointedly illustrated as by Colonel Bowles when he stepped into the ranks of the Mississippians. The situation at the moment is worth an effort at appreciation. It is after the rally on the farther side of La Bosca. The one hundred and ninety of the Second Indiana are about to attach themselves to Colonel Davis's command. They are under their own colors. Lieutenant-Colonel Hadden is in command. The crisis is terrible. Where is Colonel Bowles? I know nothing in war so strange as his conduct in that thrilling instant. With his rallied "handful" he approaches the Mississippians. First securing a rifle and cartridges—let us suppose from a wounded man or one dead—he takes place in the ranks unobserved by the strangers. Near by is his own regiment. Their colors are his colors. He is entitled to command them. They are the men who voted him colonel, with whom he has tented and marched and lived the whole of his soldier life. He must have seen them—he must have seen the flag. Why did he turn away and abandon them to become for the time a Mississippian? Why prefer the strangers? Why? The question has a depth beyond me. But—and this is the application—what of *gallantry* is there in the behavior?<sup>1</sup>

Finally, on the point of cowardice. I am a dissenter

<sup>1</sup> General O. O. Howard is the most recent author of a biography of General Taylor. In the book he adopts his subject's view of the conduct of the Second Indiana, thinking it not worth while to look behind that officer's report of the battle of Buena Vista.

Here is a sample of his dealing. Summarizing—page 271—he says: "Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Mississippi, Texas, and some Indiana men had fought hard all this dreadful day." By the table on page 192, General Howard is right. There were *some* Indiana men who fought hard; indeed, there were some wounded, others actually killed. As he has the reputation of a Christian gentleman, not to speak of him as a brave soldier, the table quoted is especially recommended to him.



to the opinion often urged that the sovereign test of the conduct of a corps in battle is the list of casualties; still, to apply that test in this instance, here is a table of losses by commands at Buena Vista compiled from official returns:

Corps	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Aggregate	Corps	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Aggregate
General staff.....	1	3		4	Brought over.....	74	148	4	223
1st Dragoons.....		7		7	Arkansas Cavalry.....	17	32	4	53
2d Dragoons.....		2		2	2d Kentucky Cavalry..	44	57	1	102
3d Artillery.....	1	22	2	25	1st Illinois regiment...	29	18		47
4th Artillery.....	5	21		26	2d Illinois regiment...	48	75	3	116
Mississippi Rifles.....	40	56	2	98	2d Indiana regiment...	32	71	4	107
Kentucky Cavalry.....	27	37		61	3d Indiana regiment...	9	56		65
					Texas Volunteers.....	14	2	7	23
	74	148	4	223		267	459	23	746

When the intelligent reader, far removed from the petty jealousies of the men who fought at Buena Vista, reads that table, and sees, as he certainly will, that there was but one regiment with more casualties than the Second Indiana, he will wonder greatly, but at nothing so much as the general commanding. There may even come to him reading a realization of the lamentable fact that a man may have been a successful general and popular president of the United States, yet lack the elements without which no one can be truly great—justice and truth.

## X

Departure from Walnut Springs, May 24, 1847—Mustered out—  
Reception at New Orleans—Sergeant S. Prentiss—Robbed of  
savings—Return to Indianapolis—Resume law—*The Fair God*—  
Apply for license again from the Supreme Court.

ON May 24, 1847, the First Indiana left Walnut Springs going to "the States" for muster out.

At the mouth of the Rio Grande, while waiting for transports, I strolled out to the dunes so thickly peopled with our dead. The revelations were shocking. Reporting what I had seen, the good colonel ordered me to take a working party and rebury all exposed remains. The sorrowful duty done, I lingered to take a farewell look at the shifting cemetery, wondering if the government would ever set about bringing the bones of the brave back to Indiana. Fifty years are a long time out of one's life to wait for anything; and now I know *that* accomplishment will never be. The poor fellows are abandoned. Even the home folk last to love them are themselves departed. Only the Great Gulf lifts a voice for them—an inarticulate, everlasting moan.

At New Orleans, a number of regiments having arrived with terms of service expiring, the city received us. A poor affair, indeed, cheap, and unworthy mention were it not that Sergeant S. Prentiss was the chosen orator. I went to hear him.

The absence of decorations along the streets struck me dismally while passing to the square selected for the ceremony. Cut off for such a time from newspapers, I

had failed to appreciate that the war had been discussed with such bitterness that at least half the people viewed it as an unholy invasion. Of course all holding that opinion were unwilling to jubilate. They kept their flags hid and stuck to their shops.

The preparations in the square were meagre and disappointing. There was the usual out-door platform of boards, raised three or four feet from the ground, railed off on three sides, and decorated with a flag tied to a corner post. Scarcely two thousand people stood about the platform, which was crowded with field-officers and black-coated civilians of aldermanic proportions. Failing to get a seat among the dignitaries, I elbowed myself back of the stand, where, with my toes in a crack of the base-boards, and half swinging by the fingers from the railing, I made out to see the speaker when he arose.

Mr. Prentiss was at his height of fame. I remember his appearance distinctly. He was rather low in stature, full-chested, clean-shaven, and faultlessly dressed. His head was ample, round, superbly set. The brows arched high, allowing the large eyes to fill with light — eyes that would have made an ugly face beautiful. Eyes, countenance, head, mouth permissive of every variety of expression, profile, attitude, the whole man, in fact, brought me to think of pictures of Lord Byron. Like Byron, moreover, he was clubbed in one foot. I had intended taking a glance at him, hear his opening, then go away. To my astonishment, when he sat down more than an hour had passed. I had heard every word in rapt unconsciousness of my discomforts. In moments when his face was turned fully to me I caught the seeming transfiguration elsewhere alluded to. No other orator ever held me so completely. Of the singers whom I have been permitted to hear, not even the divine

Patti ruled me half so tyrannically. Bearded and bronzed as were the soldiers of his audience, they cried till the tears left glistening paths down their cheeks. I alighted from my perch sore and cramped; but from that day to this I have never regretted the year left behind me as a soldier in Mexico; neither have I at any time since been troubled with a qualm about the propriety even to righteousness of the war. Saying nothing about the glory won, our country has been in every respect greater and better of its consequences.

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